NEW

DARK HISTORY OF LONDON

TERROR ON THE TUBE! HAUNTINGS, MYSTERIES AND MURDER

INSIDE *London's secret occult past...* HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT!

Crime, **curses and** *catastrophe* **in the** *Capital*

HENRY VIII'S **TOWER OF TORMENT**

FROM JACK THE RIPPER TO THE KRAYS THE CITY'S MOST NOTORIOUS CROOKS

IN THE SHADOW OF THE BIG SMOKE: WHAT LURKS BENEATH THE RIVER THAMES?

Digital Edition

FUTURE

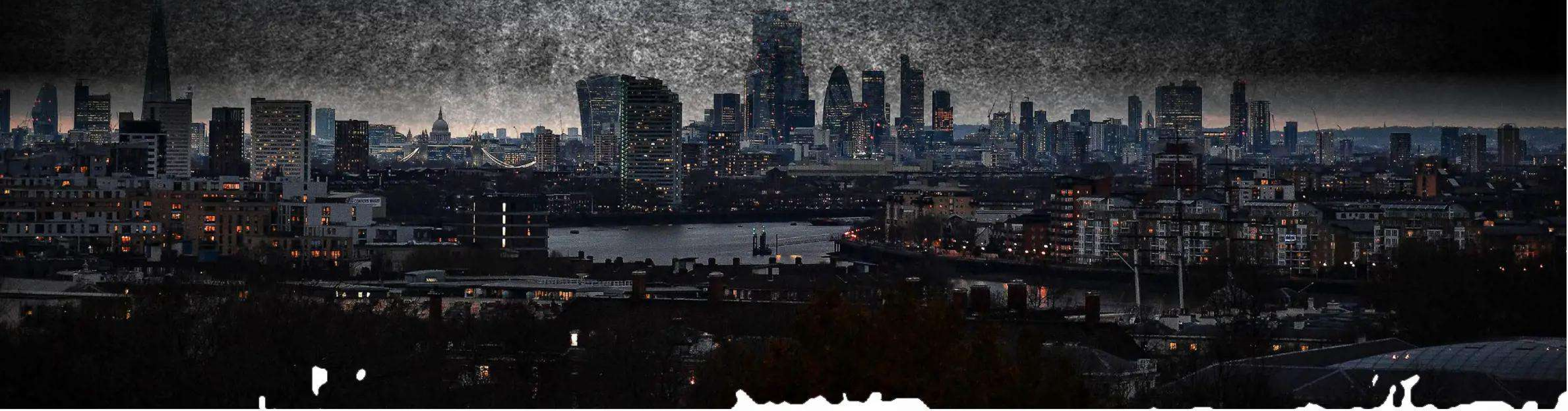
FIRST EDITION

Welcome

London was famously the muse of Charles Dickens, who described the city as a "magic lantern", in reference to early image projection devices that were the precursors to cinema projectors. Dickens used the metaphor to express how the city fed his imagination, but while magic lanterns could be used to project photographs or paintings or even animations, they displayed a fleeting, often distorted version of the truth. In the Victorian era, these devices were used by the popular form of horror theatre – known as phantasmagoria – to project frightening images of ghosts, demons and skeletons. And so, perhaps Dickens – an avid social commentator – was also alluding to how, in a city like London, everything is not exactly as it seems.

Beneath the facade of this magnificent metropolis, the epicentre of what was once the British Empire and a modern day economic hub, there is something more sinister: a city built on turmoil, drenched in the blood of war, plague, poverty and devastation and haunted by its history.

So let's uncover the heinous heritage that has been swept under the proverbial rug of the nation and delve into the macabre mysteries and sordid secrets festering beneath the capital's crowded streets.



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A DARK HISTORY OF LONDON

London's dark history is a tapestry of crime, legend, war and strife; its threads are woven into the very fabric of the capital

In its long and storied history, London has witnessed its share of tragedy and despair. It has stood firm against disease, fire, war, and crime, absorbing these stories into the streets and buildings. From the ancient times to the modern era, the nation's capital is steeped in darkness,

INTO THE DARKNESS

London has stood for nearly two millennia, built up from nothing on the place where the Trinovantes, an Iron Age Celtic tribe, once farmed the banks of the Thames. Even further back, archaeologists have found evidence of prehistoric inhabitants of the region near the river, where once people of the Mesolithic and Neolithic age made their home.

While these prehistoric residents settled along the river, the city itself was not settled for centuries. The Romans founded what became the modern city around 47 CE, four years after the invasion of Britain. They bridged the Thames at a strategic spot, constructed a port and named the settlement Londinium. Within two decades it was a major city and a centre of trade between Roman Britain and the Roman Provinces, but it fell to the flames of Queen Boudica and the Iceni around 60 CE. The soil still bears her mark, with the Boudican Destruction Horizon formed of scorched debris still laying beneath the modern metropolis.

INVADERS

The Romans rebuilt the city in stone and encircled its sprawling streets - which contained temples, a vast basilica, bath houses and an amphitheatre - with a defensive wall. The Romans fought off Saxon invasions and London

Richmond Park
Wimbledon Park
Twickenham
Isleworth
Hounslow
Kew
Barnes
Chiswick
Brentford
Putney
Fulham
Battersea
Clapham
Streatham
Greater London
Penge
Beckenham
South Norwood
Wimbledon
Mitcham

The streets of London still echo with the legends of its dark past

From ancient history to today, the city has been fuelled by fear

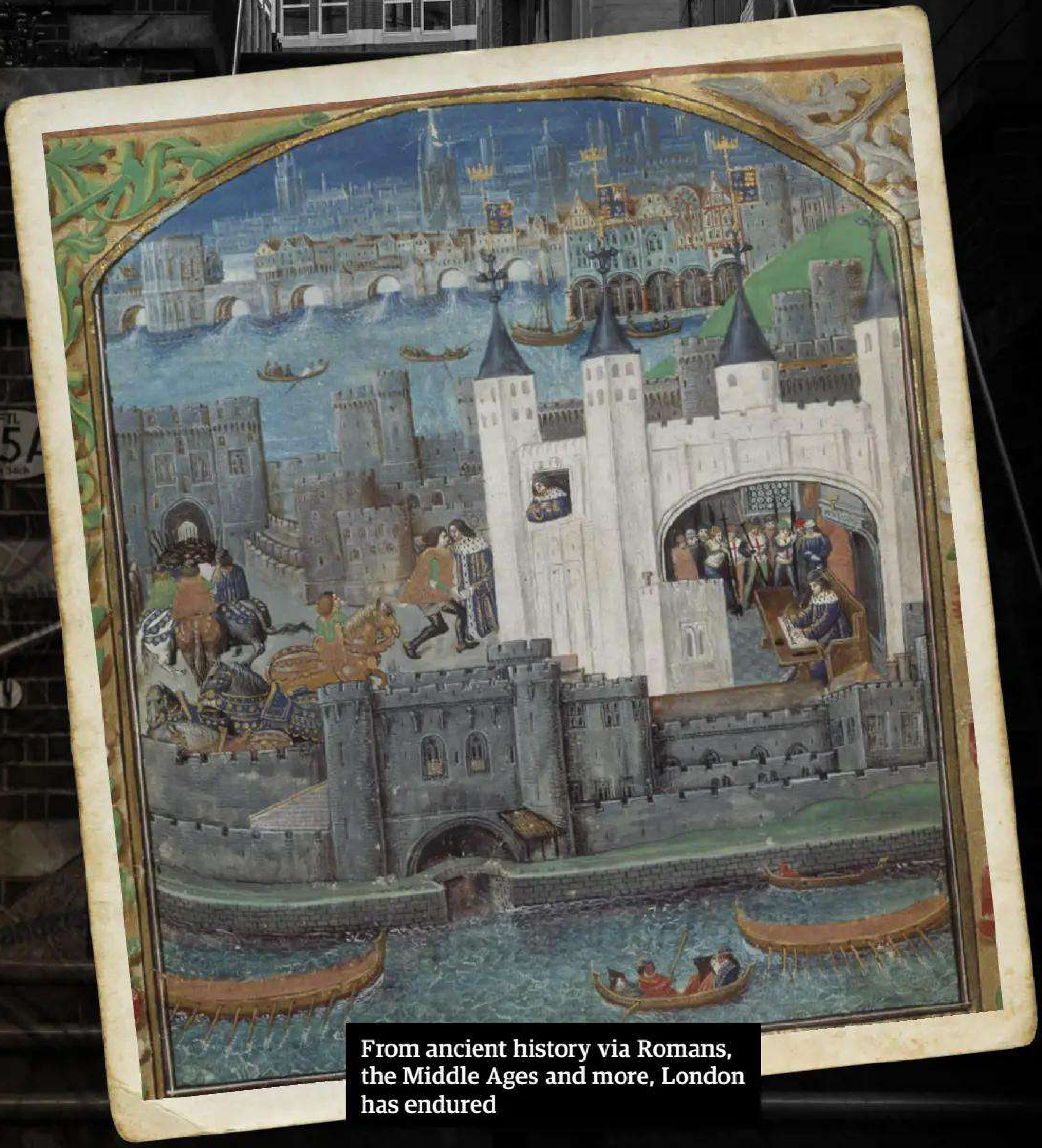
remained in their hands until 410 CE, when they left. After their departure, London rotted. With the city in rapid decline, the land around London and eventually the city itself was inhabited by Anglo-Saxons, who established the trading settlement of Lundenwic at the abandoned city. This settlement was on the site that today is the Strand. London was raided by Vikings in 842 CE and again in 851 CE, with them even camping in the town during the winter of 871-72 CE. It was Alfred the Great who saw off the invaders and rejuvenated the city, bringing the citizens back within its walls and rebuilding its defences. The Square Mile still lies inside these ancient walls.

In 1066 William the Conqueror's Norman armies arrived. After winning the Battle of Hastings, they marched to London, where William was crowned king. They start building new architecture, including the White Tower, which became the central keep of the Tower of London. During its bloody history, it served as a prison and a house of torture and execution; the severed heads of its dead were displayed on spikes that studded London Bridge.

London thrived under Norman control and the city eventually exceeded its size under the Romans. Among the stinking, chaotic mess lurked criminals and alchemists, while frost fairs sprang up on the frozen Thames. London quaked in the wake of the Black Death but even though half of its citizens were flung into plague pits, still the city forged on to bear silent witness to the Peasants' Revolt, when Wat Tyler's protesters rampaged through the capital and stormed the Tower of London.

DESTRUCTION AND REBUILD

In 1666 the Great Fire wiped out 80 per cent of the medieval city, but London was rebuilt more grandly than ever as the great Thames rolled on. The population continued to expand as the city grew until, by 1801, it exceeded a million.


From ancient history via Romans, the Middle Ages and more, London has endured

LONDON'S BURNING

Throughout its history, the city has ignited; is something more sinister afoot?

There's more than one reason that London is known as the Big Smoke – or at least, there should be. For over 2,000 years the capital has been plagued by infernos and explosions.

60-1 CE
Boudicca razed Londinium to the ground.

125
The Hadrianic Fire destroyed vast swathes of the rebuilt city.

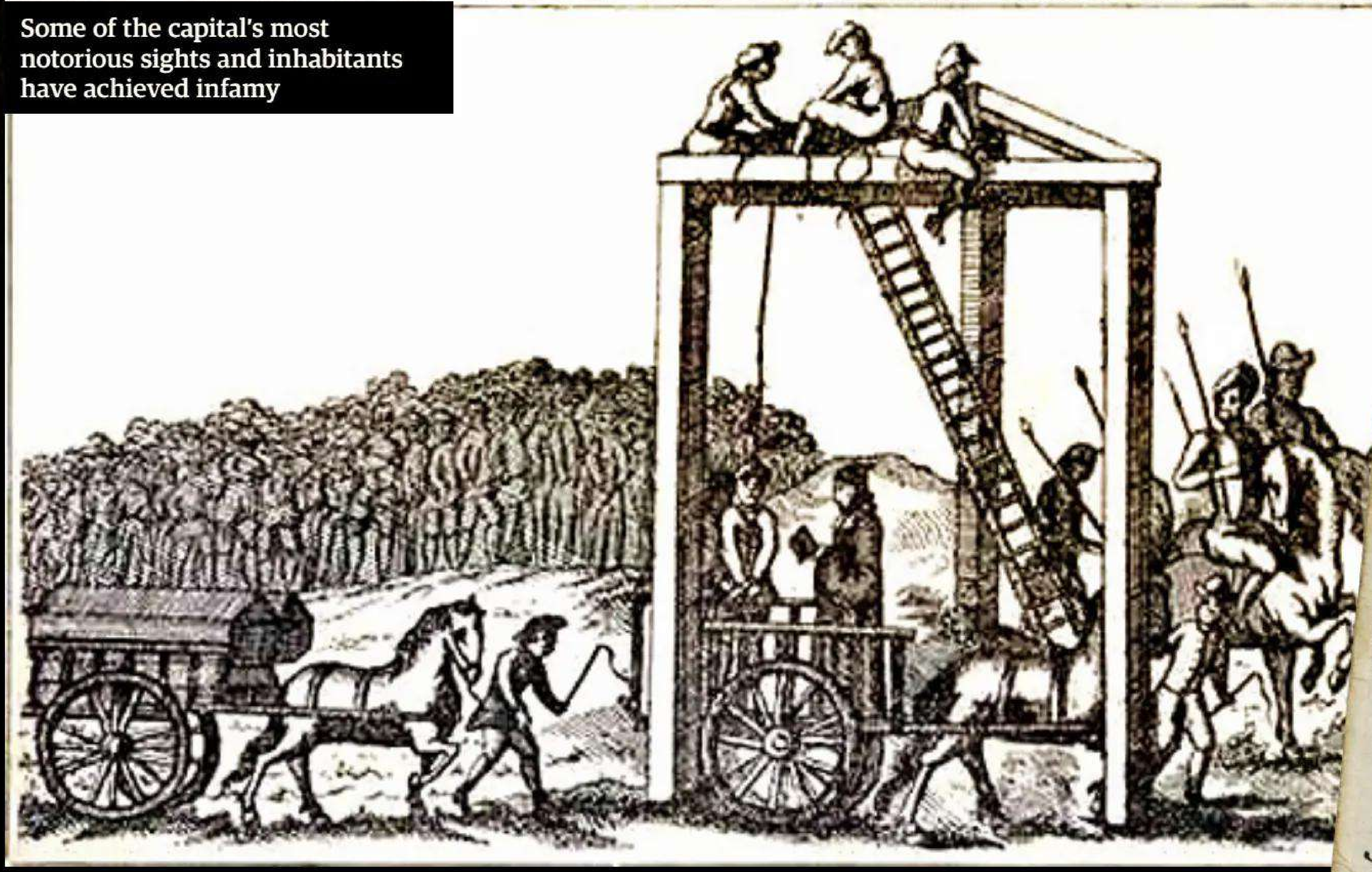
1087
Much of London, which was built of wood, was destroyed in the Norman Fire of 1087. Among the casualties was St Paul's Cathedral.

1135
A huge fire burnt down the wooden London Bridge.

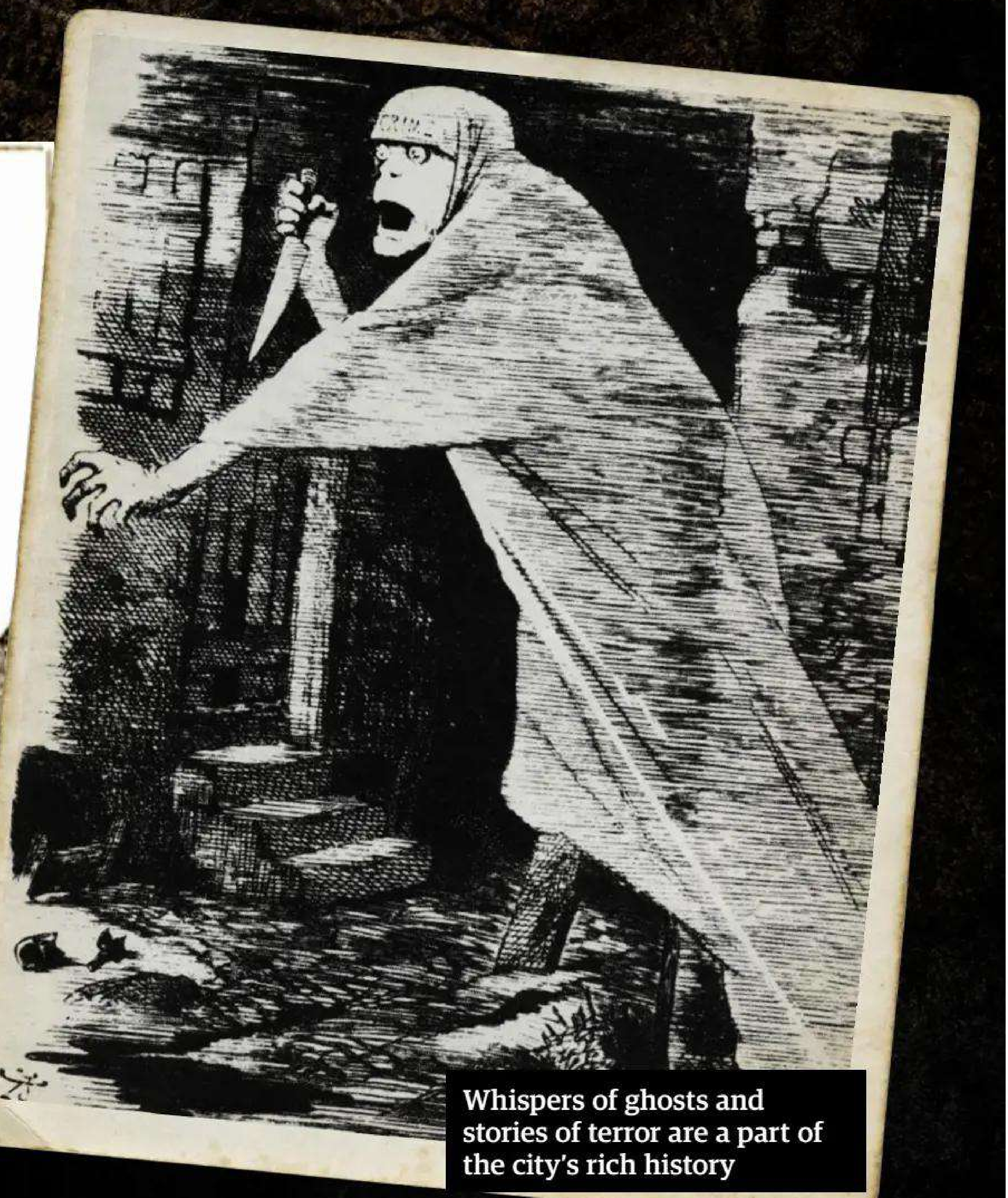
1212
At the London Bridge Fire, or Great Fire of Southwark, a fire broke out in Southwark, crossed the bridge and killed thousands of trapped citizens.

1561
St Paul's Cathedral was struck by lightning, leading to a conflagration.

1633
Another London Bridge Fire resulted in the destruction of a third of the houses built on the bridge.



Some of the capital's most notorious sights and inhabitants have achieved infamy



Whispers of ghosts and stories of terror are a part of the city's rich history

While the Georgians turned London into the capital of pleasure, where stories of Dick Turpin's reign of terror in Epping Forest kept the coffee houses enthralled, the Victorians reshaped it into the jewel of an empire. Under the reign of Queen Victoria, the slums seethed and the Great Stink enveloped the capital in a revolting miasma. The slums also saw Jack the Ripper stalk the streets of Whitechapel.

Yet amidst the darkness, some tried to shine a light into the most grim corners of the city.

New sewers fixed the Great Stink and tamed cholera. London's docks were the gateway to the world's trade, while a new metropolitan police force was formed to combat the rampant crime. Even the dead weren't spared this new, industrial vision and the London Necropolis Railway carried both corpses and mourners to the vast Brookwood Cemetery in Surrey.

Centuries after invasion and fire had shattered the city, London burned again in the Blitz. Yet once again, the city bounced back. Today it is a melting pot of cultures and people, but beneath the lights of Leicester Square and the well-trodden streets of the capital, a world of darkness lurks.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The names of London's districts tell its story. Soho was once the deer park of King Henry VIII and the hunting cry of "So-ho" that rang out whenever a stag took flight gave the area its name. Farringdon's Bleeding Heart Yard, meanwhile, was christened in honour of a legendary appearance of Virgin Mary, who was said to have appeared in 1626,with her heart bleeding crimson. Either that, or it was named after a pub.

In 1411 two knights fought a duel to the death and that, according to local legend, is what gave Knightsbridge its name. Marylebone was once St Mary-by-the-Bourne, with Bourne being an old word for stream or river, which referred to the River Tyburn. Today that river, which shared its name with the fearsome gallows at Tyburn, flows deep beneath the streets.

PHANTOMS AND FEARS

The rich tapestry of London is woven of threads that go back into the mist of history. Every thread tells a story and some of them are notorious, from Guy Fawkes' doomed plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament to the acid bath of John George Haigh and the mysterious occult symbolism of Hawksmoor.

Some believe that the dead still walk the London streets where once they lived, now shadows and whispers of a past that has been lost. Deep in the great, seething, sprawling metropolis of London, there is history and legend, darkness and light; it's just waiting to be discovered.

1666
The Great Fire of London destroyed most of the buildings within the city walls.

1780
The Gordon Riots brought arson to London.

1794
A massive blaze in Ratcliff destroyed hundreds of homes and warehouses.

1809
The celebrated Theatre Royal, Drury Lane was totally destroyed by flames.

1861
The Tooley Street fire burned for two weeks and caused millions in damages.

1867
A botched attempt to blow up the Clerkenwell House of Detention resulted in multiple casualties.

1917
Tonnes of TNT at a munitions factory in Silvertown detonated, leading to a raging inferno.

1928
When the Thames breached the embankment, the flood caused electrical short circuits that triggered multiple blazes.

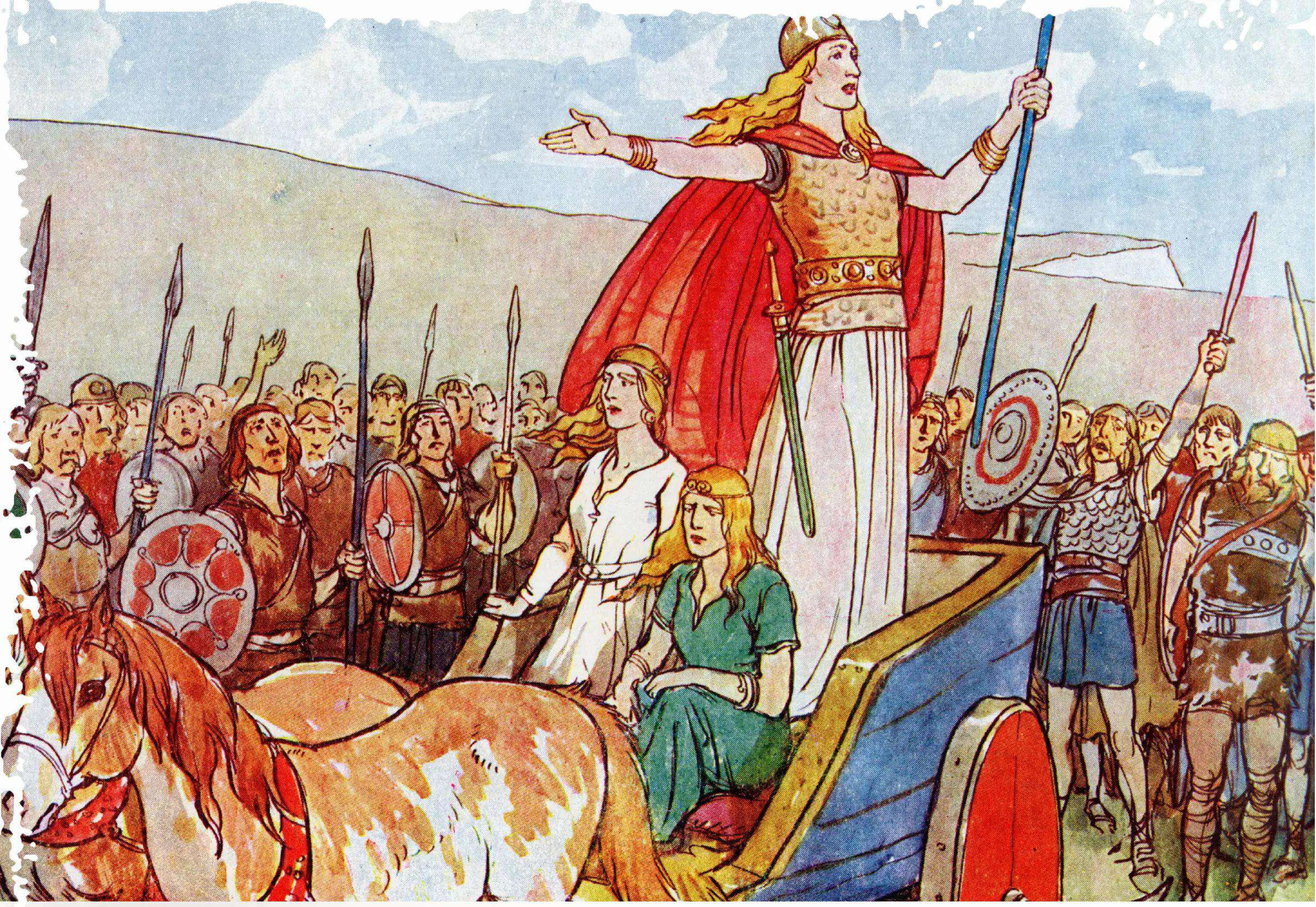
1940-1
The Blitz saw thousands of bombs rain down on London.

1970s-90s
A campaign of IRA bombings gripped the capital.

1987
The tragic King's Cross fire saw a devastating inferno rage through the underground.

2005
Four suicide attackers launched the 7/7 bombing campaign, killing 52.

2017
Seventy-two people perished in the Grenfell Tower disaster.



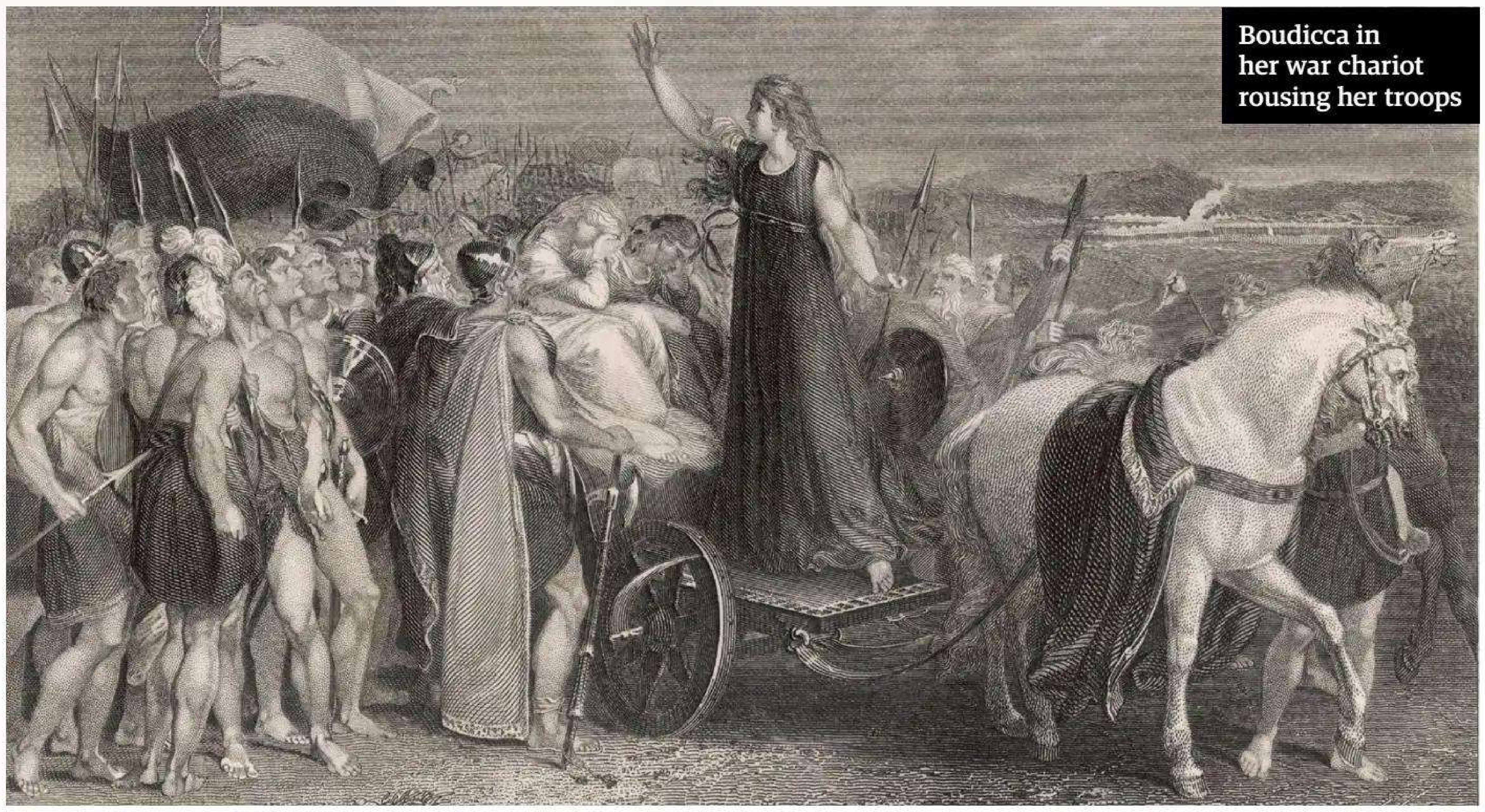
BOUDICCA LAYS WASTE TO LONDON

The revolt of the Iceni in 60-61 CE visited upon London a grim and grisly fate

The Roman Empire often witnessed a revitalisation of resistance after a period of pacification, and its experiences in Britain were no different. In 60 CE, the most famous of the Britons' rebellions erupted, the echoes of which are still heard to this day. The revolt broke out in the lands of the Iceni and Trinovantes in modern-day East Anglia, Suffolk and Greater London, with the queen of Iceni, Boudicca, at its head.

Boudicca was the widow of a client king called Prasutagus, and on his passing, the Romans had incorporated the kingdom into the province. Prasutagas had made the emperor, Nero, his co-heir in a bid to protect his family, but any hope of a smooth transition soon passed as Roman centurions and imperial slaves ran amok, committing many outrages against the royal family. Boudicca was flogged and her daughters raped. Many family members lost their land. Boudicca demanded vengeance, and the towns of Colchester (Camulodunum), St Albans (Verulamium), and London (Londinium) felt her terrible wrath. According to the Roman historian Tacitus, who provides the oldest (though not contemporaneous) account of the rebellion, she inflicted hideous abuses on the Romans and their supporters before her defeat.

Her assault on London came in the wake of the razing of Colchester, itself foreshadowed by a



Boudicca in her war chariot rousing her troops

series of strange portents, Tacitus says, including a vision emerging in the Thames estuary of the colony in ruins. When the rebellious Britons advanced upon London, they were emboldened by their series of successes, having overrun Colchester and ambushed a detachment of legionaries sent to the colony's rescue.

If any witnesses of the Iceni's destruction of Colchester had arrived in London ahead of the rampaging rebels, their tales would have struck fear into people's hearts. The Britons had paid no heed to age or gender, crucifying, hanging and putting to the sword everyone who they found. London would fare no better.

Before the Britons approached, the inhabitants might have been cheered by the arrival of the Roman governor, Gaius Suetonius Paulinus, with a cavalry escort, who considered organising a defence of the town. He soon realised, however, that there wasn't time to erect barricades and marshal the defenders, so he decided to withdraw, abandoning London to its agonising fate. "He decided to sacrifice a single town in order to save the whole province," says Tacitus.

A few able-bodied men were invited to join his column, but women, the young and the old were left to be overrun by Boudicca's army. Tacitus describes the event as "slaughter, hangings, fire and crucifixion."

It is the later writer, Cassius Dio, who provides the grimmer detail, perhaps in a bid to titillate his male readership, or perhaps knowing a little more of Celtic religions. He claims that in the groves dedicated to the goddess Andrasta, terrible atrocities were visited upon London's women. "Their breasts were cut off," he writes, "and stuffed into their mouths so that they seemed to be eating them. Then their bodies were skewered lengthwise on sharp stakes."

As to the fate of the captured men, he remains silent on the subject. There are also no definitive accounts on the exact destruction wrought upon the architecture of the place, but it was looted and it seems more than likely that the flames would have swallowed the entire town, which at this stage was built almost entirely of wood and clay and thatch. St Albans soon followed.

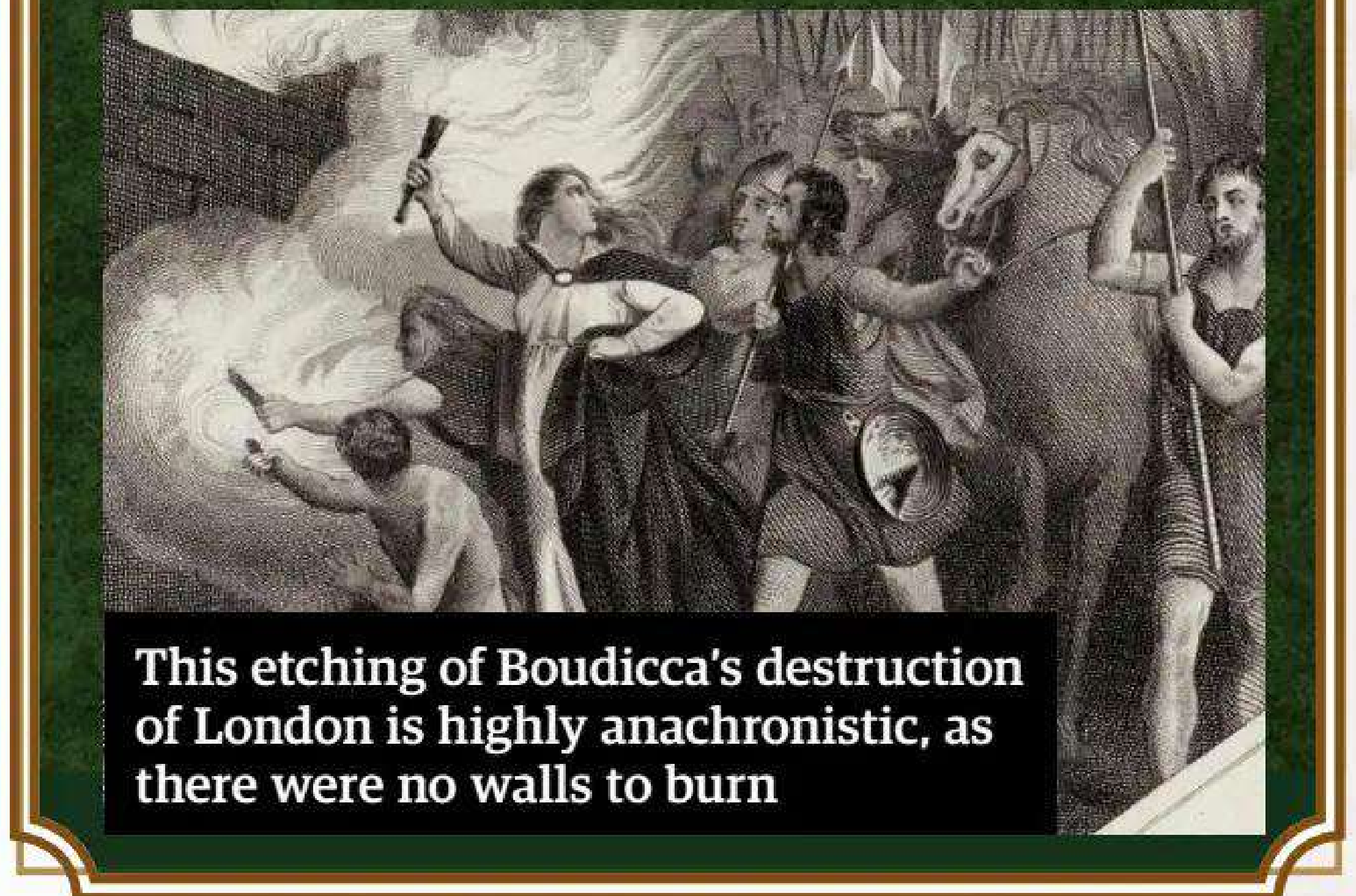
After the third town fell, Suetonius Paulinus met the Britons in battle, and his force – although smaller – was a battle-hardened and professional unit. The Roman victory was total, and the reprisals were harsh, though this proved cold comfort for those who had lost family and friends in what would be framed as Boudicca's bitter rampage.

THE STATE OF LONDON IN 60 CE

Despite being a new town, founded by the Romans shortly after the Claudian invasion of 43 CE, after just a decade, London had blossomed into a thriving entrepôt brimming with traders and travellers. Its walls were still many years from construction, and there would have been little stone architecture at this embryonic stage. The nucleus of this settlement was centred on either side of the Thames, linked by a Roman bridge, and it already enjoyed a rectilinear street pattern.

The archaeological evidence of Boudicca's destruction is found in a red layer of oxidised iron that lies among a layer of burnt clay, wood and ash. "It is the first token of the city's appetite for human life," writes London's biographer Peter Ackroyd. "Red is London's colour, a sign of fire and devastation."

Legend has it that modern-day King's Cross – once known as Battle Bridge – was the site of the major battle between the Romans and the Iceni. There is no historical evidence of this, although Lewis Spence's 1937 book Boadicea: Warrior Queen Of The Britons included a highly fanciful map showing the positions of the two armies. There is also a legend that after the battle, Boudicca was buried in a grave that lies currently between platforms 9 and 10 in King's Cross Station, although again, there is no evidence to support the claim.



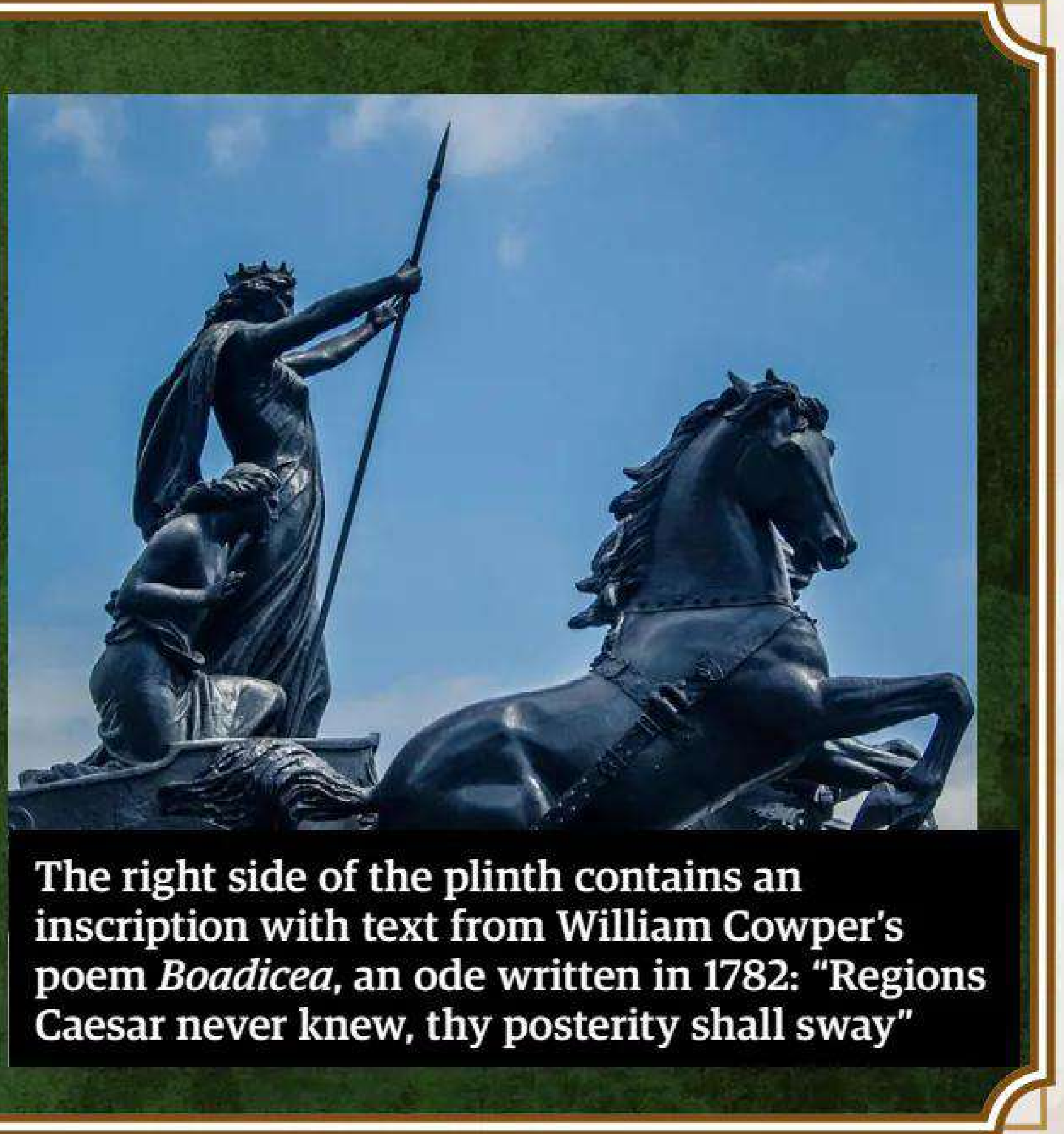
This etching of Boudicca's destruction of London is highly anachronistic, as there were no walls to burn

BOADICEA AND HER DAUGHTERS

London's famous statue commemorates the warrior queen

It may seem peculiar that a city that suffered so horribly should commemorate the woman who inflicted the pain. And yet this bronze statue of Boudicca and her two daughters stands proudly on the north side of Westminster Bridge, near Portcullis House and Westminster Pier, opposite Big Ben and the Palace of Westminster. It is considered the defining work of its sculptor, the English artist and engineer Thomas Thornycroft, who worked on it for the 30 years prior to his death in 1885, though it was not set in its current position until 1902. It depicts the warrior queen standing upright in a flowing gown with a spear in her right hand, and her left hand raised high above her head. Her daughters, who suffered horribly at the hands of the Romans, crouch beside her.

Reflecting the Victorian's fascination with Celtic heroes, it carries their spelling of her name, Boadicea. It also reflects Victorian learning, as the chariot in which she rides sports huge scythed blades on its wheels. However, the literary and archaeological evidence suggests the Celts did not fix blades to their war chariots and the chariot is in fact based on Roman models.



The right side of the plinth contains an inscription with text from William Cowper's poem *Boadicea*, an ode written in 1782: "Regions Caesar never knew, thy posterity shall sway"

© Alamy

THE TERRIBLE RIVER THAMES

What lies beneath Britain's most iconic waterway?

For most people, the River Thames is familiar and comforting; a silver ribbon threading through the very heart of London, framed by iconic bridges, boats, towers, shards of glass and beautiful views. But beneath its murky surface lies a very different world, a world carved out by ritual offerings, human bodies, war, executions, tragedy, suicides, ghosts and many secrets. The Thames has been a silent witness to over 10,000 years of human history and at times has been responsible for swallowing countless souls.

The river stretches 346 kilometres (215 miles), starting in the village of Kemble in Gloucestershire and ending at the Thames Estuary, which flows into the North Sea. Originally known as Tamesis, the River Thames is one of the oldest recorded river names in Britain. Linguists still debate the exact origin of the word, but many point to the Proto-Celtic root *tam*, meaning 'dark' or 'river', which makes the long-repeated translation "the dark one" at least plausible.

The river has always been dark, not only in colour but in reputation. Its waters are cloudy, silty and very unpredictable. But they were also considered sacred. Even before the Romans arrived in Britain, the river was already a place of ritual activity. It was seen as a boundary between the living and the divine by the Celtic Britons.

Archaeologists have uncovered some extraordinary objects hidden deep in the mud of the River Thames, including bent swords, broken spears, Bronze Age shields, gold jewellery, entire sets of tools or weaponry and even human skulls, some showing signs of decapitation. While some historians suggest these finds may point to ritual killings or human sacrifice, others argue they represent symbolic offerings rather than evidence of widespread sacrificial practices. These items were not just lost or discarded, but are thought to have been offerings. Prehistoric peoples believed rivers were portals, opening to another world. Anything you placed into the water was passed to the gods.

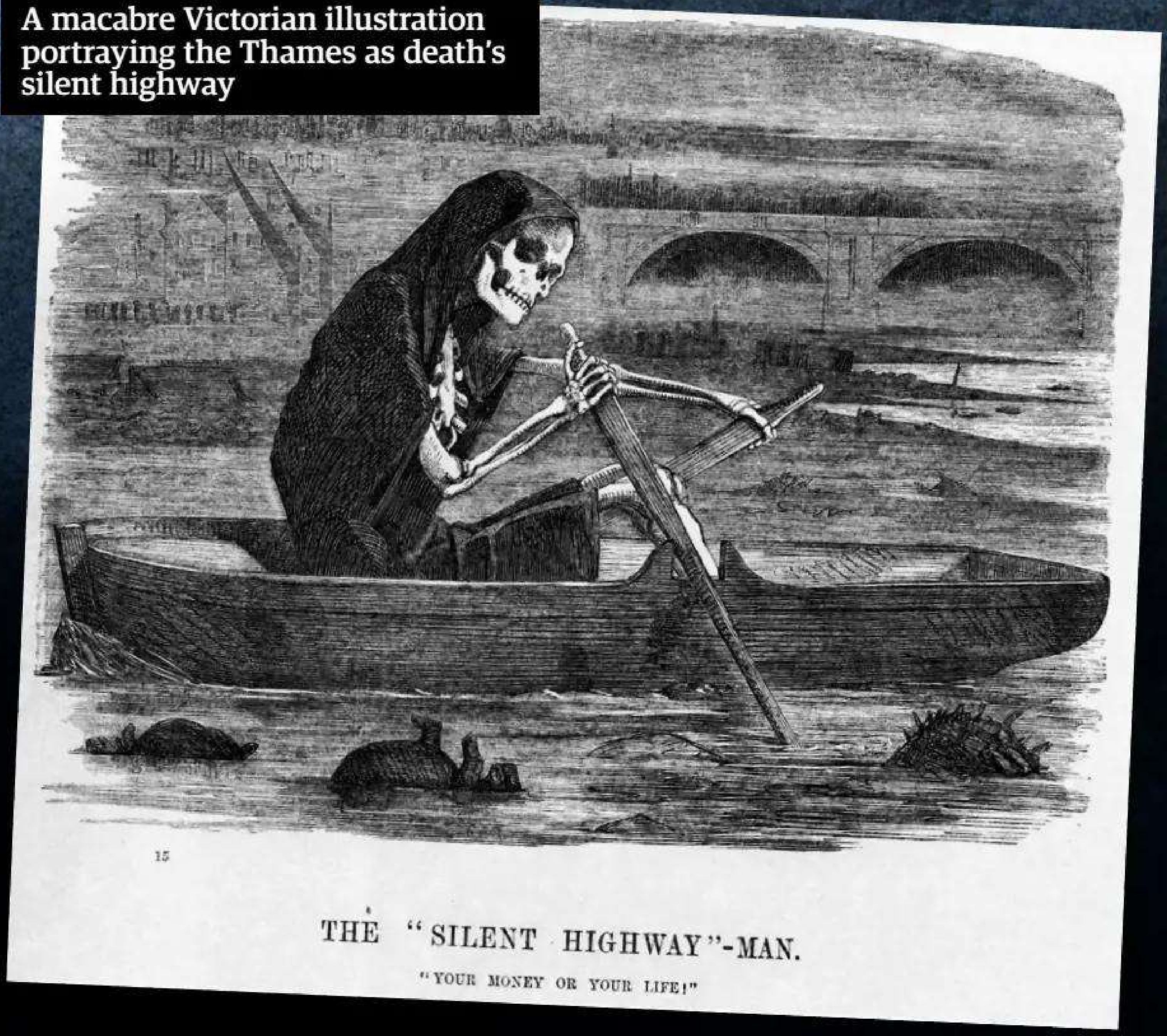
In 43 CE, Emperor Claudius invaded Britain, and Roman forces chose to settle on the site of London because of its strategic location on the Thames. The river was deep enough for sea-going ships yet narrow enough to bridge, making it the lowest practical crossing point. This gave the Romans a strategic foothold for trade, transport and control of the region.

The Thames is, and always has been, much more than just a river. It is a boundary, an effective transport system, a cemetery, a crime scene, a ritualistic landscape, a refuge for many and a treasure chest. Some even say that the River Thames is a haunted, living entity in its own right.

From ancient Celtic offerings to the blood-soaked stones of Traitors' Gate, from Victorian murder mysteries to modern tragedies… this is a river that remembers everything.

Dark storm clouds gather over the River Thames, a reminder that beneath London's modern skyline flows a river shaped by centuries of tragedy, danger, and untold stories

© Getty Images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THE "SILENT HIGHWAY"-MAN.
"YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE!"

A macabre Victorian illustration portraying the Thames as death's silent highway

Pollution and Cholera

THE DIRTY THAMES

Death, disease and the river that nearly brought London to its knees

Throughout the 19th century, the River Thames earned its nickname 'The Dirty Thames'. As the population in London exploded, the river became the city's open sewer system. All household and industrial waste, including raw human sewage, poured into the river on a daily basis. During the summer, the foul stench consumed the capital like a toxic fog. Beneath the surface of the polluted water, though, something far deadlier was lurking.

Cholera swept through London in a series of devastating outbreaks between 1831 and 1866. Many people at the time believed that the disease was spread through London's foul air, but it was a physician called John Snow who managed to trace the source of the infection to contaminated water.

The River Thames was polluted beyond imagination and had become a conduit for death. Thousands of Londoners who depended upon the river for drinking water tragically died as the disease ravaged the city's overcrowded streets and districts.

Cholera struck with terrifying speed. Victims could feel perfectly well in the morning and collapse by nightfall. The disease caused violent vomiting, agonising stomach cramps and relentless diarrhoea so severe that sufferers rapidly dehydrated, their skin shrivelling. The cramped, unsanitary conditions most people lived in made the experience even more horrific. There were no effective treatments, no understanding of how the disease spread, and little comfort in overcrowded slums, where family members watched loved ones weaken and die within hours. The fear was as pervasive as the illness itself, sweeping through neighbourhoods already struggling with poverty, filth and contaminated water drawn straight from the Thames. To make matters worse, the human waste contaminated with the cholera bacteria ended up in the same river that supplied the drinking water to households without adequate filtration. This further exacerbated the problem and started the cycle all over again.

The crisis eventually forced Parliament to act quickly, setting the stage for a new revolutionary sewer system to be introduced across London and so the arduous, but much needed cleansing process of the Thames began.

Pirates

PIRATES OF THE THAMES

The gangs that preyed on London's river

Pirates did operate on the Thames – not in the Hollywood sense of swashbuckling buccaneers with parrots on their shoulders – but a very real, gritty underworld of river thieves, smugglers and raiders who terrorised London's busiest waterway for centuries.

For much of its history, the River Thames was crawling with 'pirates', although Londoners called them river pirates, watermen rogues, or river thieves. Valuable cargo was often stored or traded along the docks and quaysides of London, including spices, silks, salt and pepper, tobacco, gunpowder and barrels of rum.

Gangs of thieves, such as the notorious Thames Pirates, The Light Horsemen and the Mudlarks, would operate under cover of darkness, slipping between moored ships, raiding boats and warehouses, cutting ropes and stealing anything they could physically carry or get away with. Some of these river pirates used small, fast boats to get around, while others worked in a more organised criminal network that used to bribe dockworkers or even intimidate them to help them with their crimes.

By the end of the 18th century, piracy on the Thames had become such a serious problem that a dedicated police force was created to combat it. The Marine Police Force, founded in 1798, patrolled the river and its waterfront, yet theft and violence persisted. Criminal gangs hijacked barges, robbed shipmen at knifepoint and disappeared into the maze of riverside alleys and dimly lit streets that lined the Thames.

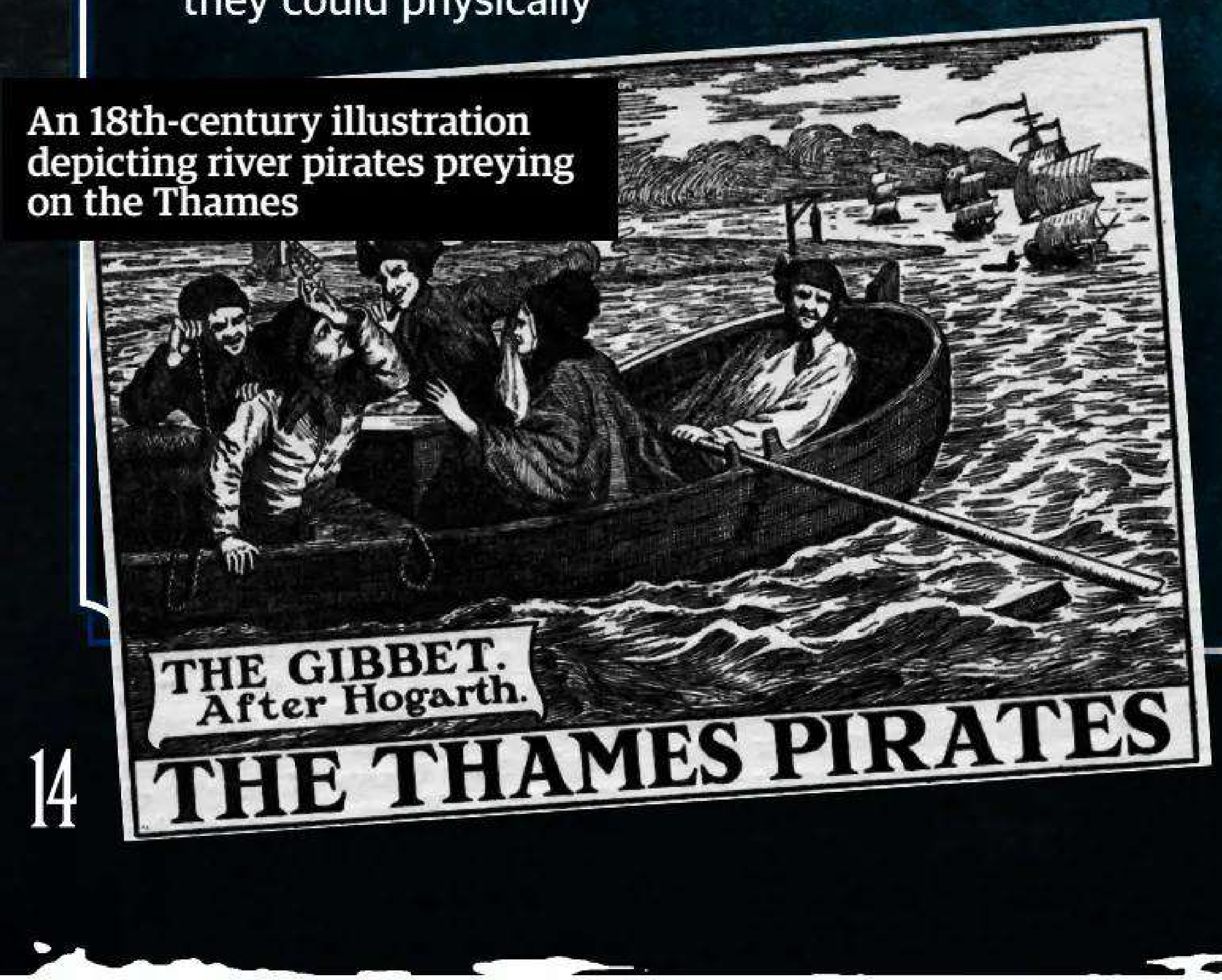
For those caught, punishment was brutal and deliberately public. Pirates fell under Admiralty law and were executed at Execution Dock in Wapping, close to where the Prospect of Whitby stands today (London's oldest riverside pub). Unlike land-based hangings, the maritime gallows were positioned over the river itself. Tradition demanded that the bodies be left suspended until three tides had passed beneath them, their remains slowly claimed by the Thames as a warning to all who travelled its waters.

One of the most notorious figures to meet his grisly end there was Captain William Kidd. Although he wasn't a river pirate, he became one of the most famous figures ever executed on the River Thames.

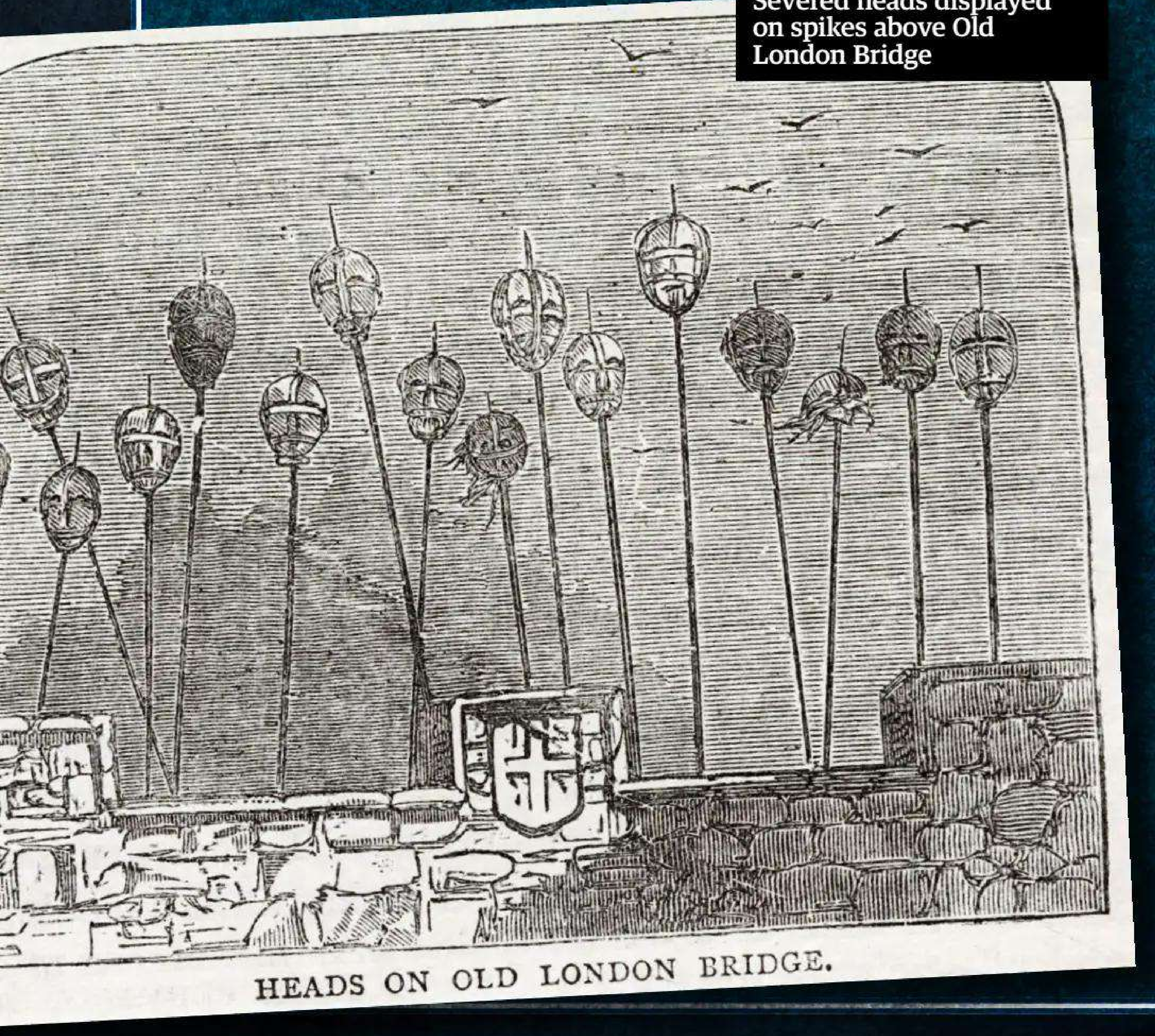
Once a privateer operating under royal commission, Kidd was later accused of piracy and murder. Arrested and returned to London, his trial drew huge public attention. On 23 May 1701, he was hanged at Execution Dock before a vast crowd. According to folklore the rope snapped during his first hanging, forcing the execution to be carried out again. His body was later tarred and displayed in an iron gibbet beside the river, a final, chilling deterrent.

Crime along the Thames was also orchestrated by figures such as Jonathan Wild, who by the early 1700s had become London's most infamous criminal mastermind. Wild controlled gangs that stole valuable cargo from ships on the river, then posed as a heroic 'thief-taker' by returning stolen goods in exchange for reward money. He ran a vast criminal empire built on river robbery, warehouse theft and extortion along the Thames.

Wild was eventually exposed and sentenced to death for receiving stolen goods. He was hanged at Tyburn on 24 May 1725. Even in death, he was denied dignity. His body was delivered to Surgeon's Hall and publicly dissected, bringing a grim end to a career that was built on exploiting London's river.



An 18th-century illustration depicting river pirates preying on the Thames


HEADS ON OLD LONDON BRIDGE.

Severed heads displayed on spikes above Old London Bridge

Severed Heads
A PRISONER'S DEATH

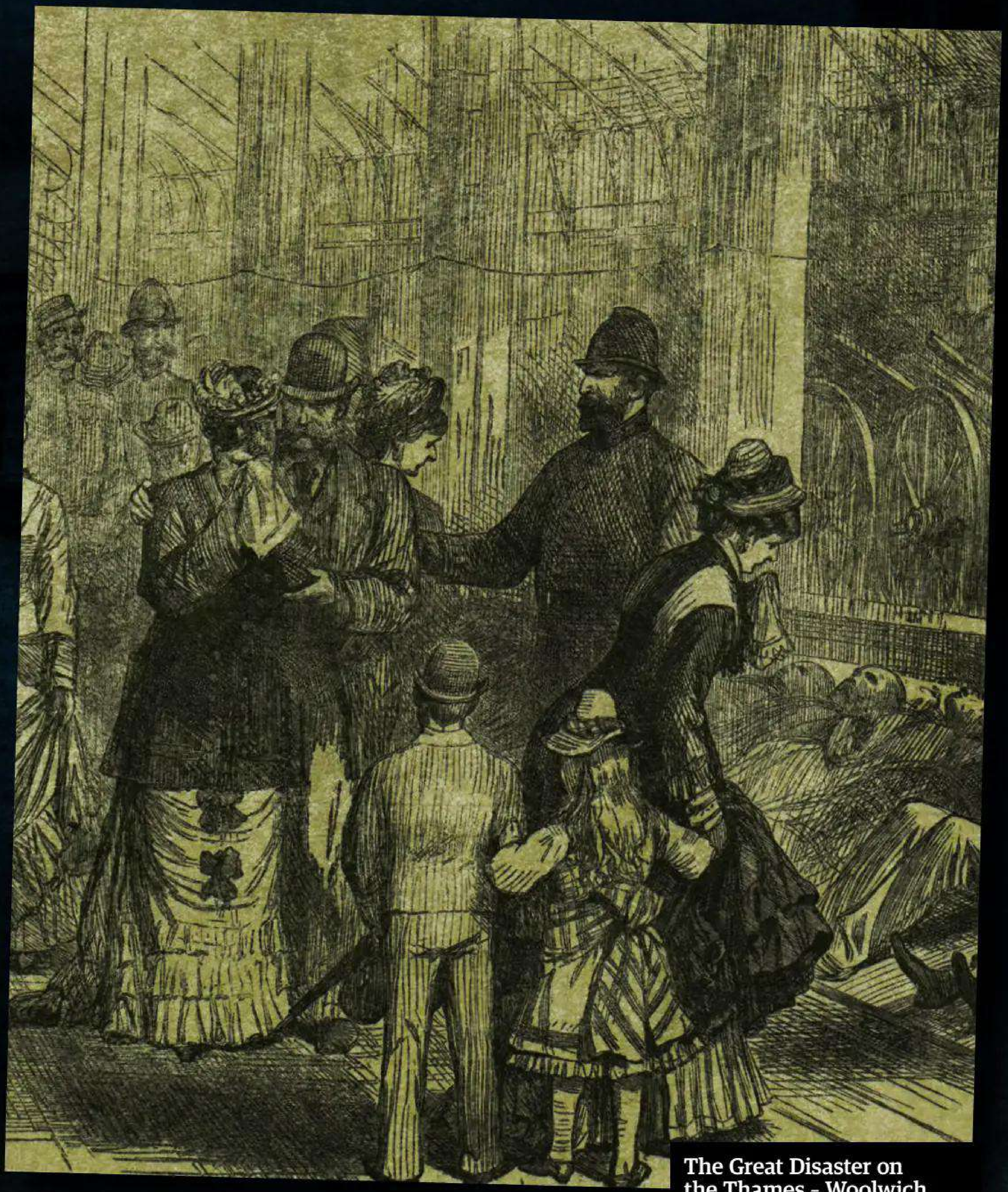
The gruesome display of who's in charge

For hundreds of years, the River Thames was stage to one of the most macabre demonstrations of power and royal authority. The severed heads of traitors were mounted on iron spikes for all of London to bear witness.

From the late medieval period into the 17th century, the heads of executed prisoners were dipped in tar, raised high above the river, and left to rot for all travellers, traders and riverboat ferrymen to see. The most notorious place where this gruesome display was erected was on London Bridge, where its stone gatehouse became a macabre landmark known across Europe, acting as a brutal and deliberate reminder to all of Britain's strength and power. It suggested that defying the Crown would be met with a fate worse than just death.

The heads of William Wallace, Sir Thomas More, the Gunpowder plotters and many more all ended up mounted on iron spikes beside the river, left to rot. Over time the birds would strip the skulls bare of flesh, and the authorities would leave them up for all to see. The longer these severed heads were left up, the more powerful and stronger the message was thought to be.

As centuries passed, this macabre practice died out, but its shadow still lingers. The River Thames has over the years washed away many horrors, yet the memories of those grim trophies remain part of its dark history.



The Great Disaster on the Thames - Woolwich Dockyard 1878

SS Princess Alice
A RIVER DISASTER

The Thames catastrophe that claimed hundreds of lives in 1878

On the evening of 3 September 1878, the River Thames was the scene of one of Britain's deadliest maritime disasters. The SS Princess Alice, a popular paddle steamer, was returning from a pleasure trip to Gravesend carrying hundreds of day-trippers enjoying the late summer weather. As the vessel approached Gallions Reach, near Woolwich, it collided with a coal ship named Bywell Castle.

The impact tore the smaller passenger vessel apart and within minutes, the SS Princess Alice broke in two and sank beneath the surface of the Thames. Panic followed as passengers were thrown into the water or trapped below deck. Many of them could not swim, and the disaster was made far worse by the condition of the river itself. The Thames at this point was heavily polluted with untreated raw sewage and industrial waste. Survivors later described choking on foul water as they fought to stay afloat.

More than 600 people are believed to have died, making it the worst disaster on the Thames and one of the deadliest inland water tragedies in British history. Bodies were recovered for weeks downriver, and entire families were wiped out in a single night.

Public outrage was immense. The tragedy exposed serious failures in river navigation, passenger safety and pollution control. In its aftermath, stricter shipping regulations were introduced and pressure mounted to clean up the Thames, a process that would take decades. This river boat tragedy remains a stark reminder of just how dangerous the river once was.

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Marchioness Disaster

A DEADLY CRUISE

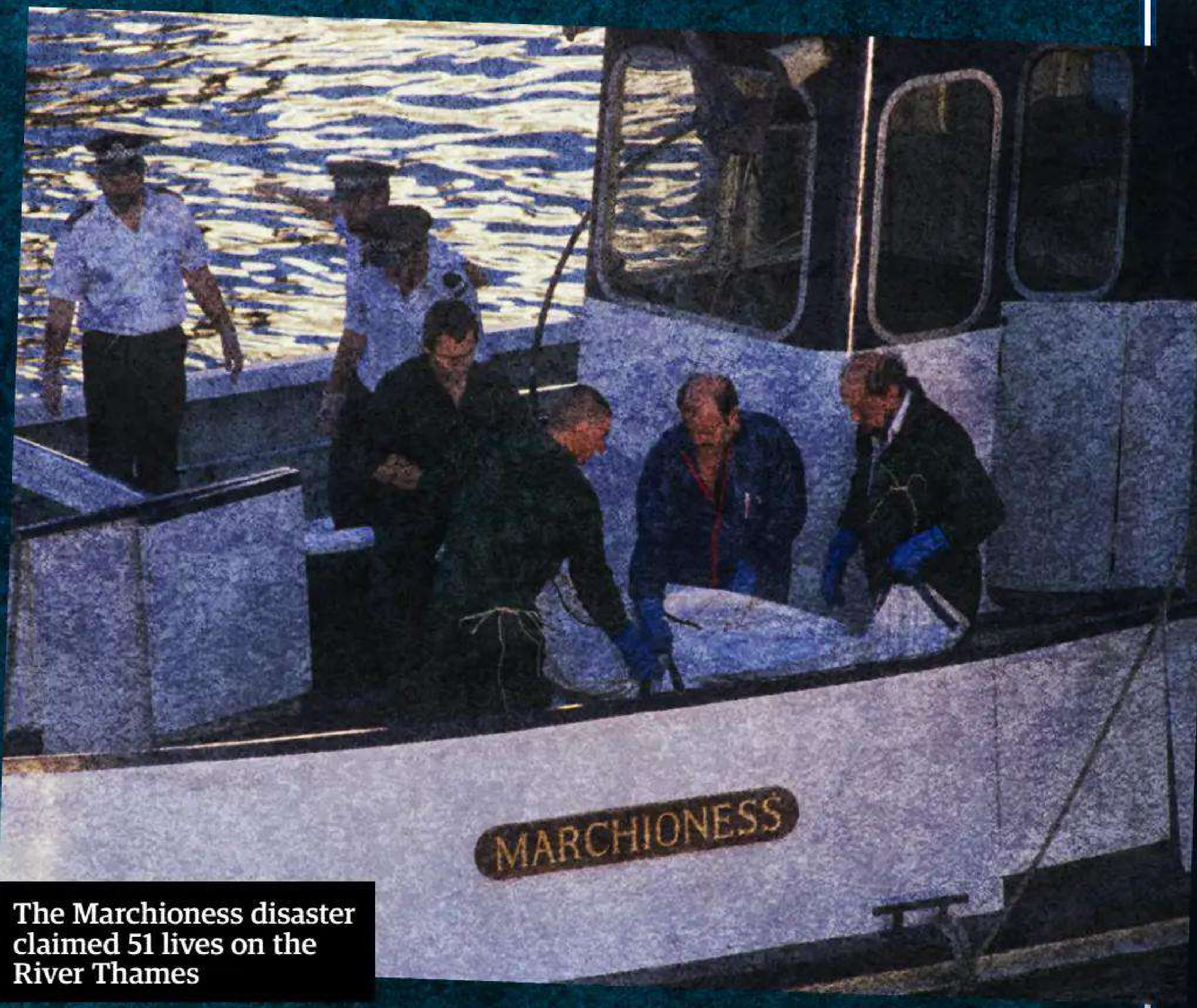
The night a river pleasure cruise ended in tragedy

Over 100 years after the tragic SS Princess Alice disaster, the River Thames once again became the setting for one of London's most shocking peacetime disasters. On 20 August 1989, The Marchioness, a pleasure boat carrying friends celebrating a birthday, was making its way upriver near Southwark Bridge when it was struck from behind by a dredger called Bowbelle. The impact was sudden and catastrophic. Within minutes, the smaller boat rolled and disappeared beneath the river's surface.

Those on board had little warning and even less time. Many were thrown into the water and others were trapped below deck as the boat went down. The river was dark, the current strong, and confusion spread quickly. Tragically 51 people lost their lives that night, many just a short distance from the riverbank.

In the aftermath, questions were understandably asked about navigation, communication and safety on the Thames. Rescue efforts were criticised, and families of the victims began a long campaign for answers. Their persistence eventually led to public inquiries and meaningful changes in river safety, including improved traffic control and emergency procedures.

More than three decades on, the Marchioness disaster remains a painful reminder that the Thames, for all its beauty, can still be unforgiving, especially when warnings go unheard.



The Marchioness disaster claimed 51 lives on the River Thames

The 1928 Thames flood

Great Flood of London

WHEN LONDON DROWNED

A brutal flood that struck without mercy or warning

On the bitterly cold morning of 7 January 1928, London was caught off guard by one of the most devastating floods in its modern history. Days of heavy rain had already swollen the River Thames, but a sudden combination of melting snow, a high spring tide and a powerful storm surge funnelling up the Thames estuary tipped the river past breaking point. Just after midnight, the river burst its banks, sending a torrent of water through central London with almost no warning.

The worst damage occurred between Westminster and Lambeth. The Chelsea Embankment was completely overwhelmed, and at Millbank the river simply rose over the top of the wall, sending a torrent of icy, debris-filled water rushing into streets, homes and even parts of the Tate Gallery.

Residents in basement flats had little chance to escape. Within minutes, hundreds of houses were submerged, gas mains ruptured and electricity failed across several districts. Fourteen people lost their lives, most of them trapped in lower-ground rooms as the water surged in.

The aftermath exposed how vulnerable London still was to the whims of the river. Thousands were left homeless, and whole streets required rebuilding. Public calls for better flood protection led to a series of improvements, including raising walls and strengthening embankments, but the disaster remains a stark warning for those who live in England's capital.

The Great Flood of 1928 is often overshadowed by later even more devastating events, yet it stands as a chilling reminder that the Thames has never been a tame river, and that even the heart of London can be brought to its knees in a single night.

The Minke Whale Tragedy

THE LOST WHALE

A brief appearance that ended in heartbreak on the Thames

Lifeboat workers trying to save the minke whale on the River Thames

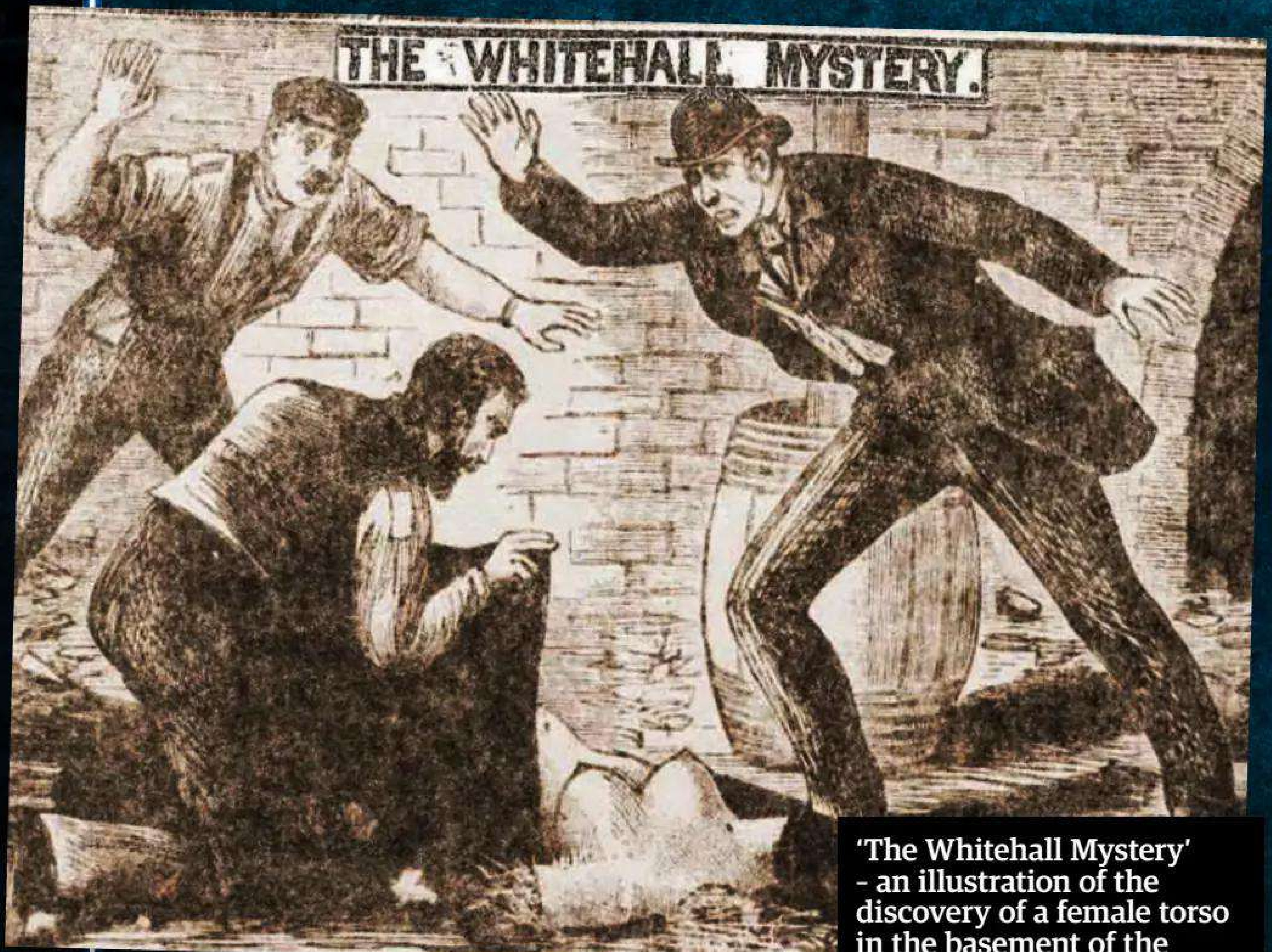
In May 2021, a young minke whale became the focus of national attention after swimming up the River Thames, appearing between Richmond and Teddington. Crowds gathered as the exhausted animal struggled against strong currents, boat traffic and tidal changes far from its natural habitat. Despite the efforts of marine rescue teams, the whale's condition rapidly deteriorated. After veterinary assessments concluded it was suffering severe muscle damage and extreme distress, the difficult decision was made to humanely euthanise the unfortunate mammal.

The tragedy sparked widespread public sadness, along with debate about marine navigation, river safety and environmental pressures. It also highlighted how noise pollution, illness, or disorientation can drive ocean animals into perilous urban waterways, often with fatal consequences.

The Mystery of the Thames Torsos

GRISLY MURDERS

How the Thames concealed one of London's darkest mysteries


THE WHITEHALL MYSTERY.

'The Whitehall Mystery' – an illustration of the discovery of a female torso in the basement of the Norman Shaw Building in 1888 from *The Illustrated Police News* newspaper, October 1888

Between 1887 and 1889, the River Thames became the centre of one of Victorian London's most disturbing criminal mysteries – a series of gruesome discoveries that would later be known as the Thames Torso Murders.

Unlike the better-known crimes of Jack the Ripper, these cases involved dismembered human remains found abandoned along the river and its tributaries, often carefully wrapped and deliberately concealed.

The first remains were discovered near Rainham, Essex in 1887, followed by further finds at locations including Whitehall, Battersea and Pimlico. What shocked investigators was the consistency. In several cases, only torsos were recovered, with the heads and limbs nowhere to be found.

Post-mortem examinations suggested the bodies had been expertly dismembered, likely shortly after death, pointing to someone with a level of anatomical knowledge.

At the time, London was gripped by fear. The Thames was the city's lifeblood and a route for trade, travel and industry, yet it was also dark, heavily polluted and poorly policed. Its tidal nature allowed evidence to drift between different areas of London, confusing investigations and hiding crime scenes.

Victorian forensic science was still in its infancy, and communication between police divisions was poor. As a result, no clear suspect was ever identified for these heinous crimes.

The mystery deepened when some investigators began to suspect a single perpetrator was responsible, possibly operating over several years. Others argued the cases were unrelated, linked only by the river itself.

Then, the emergence of the Jack the Ripper murders in 1888 quickly dominated headlines, pushing the torso cases into the shadows, despite their equal brutality.

The Thames Torso Murders remain unresolved. What is certain is that these crimes exposed the darker underside of Victorian London, a city expanding faster than its ability to police itself.

The river that sustained the capital also concealed its secrets, carrying evidence away with every tide. More than a century later, the unanswered questions still drift beneath the surface of the Thames.

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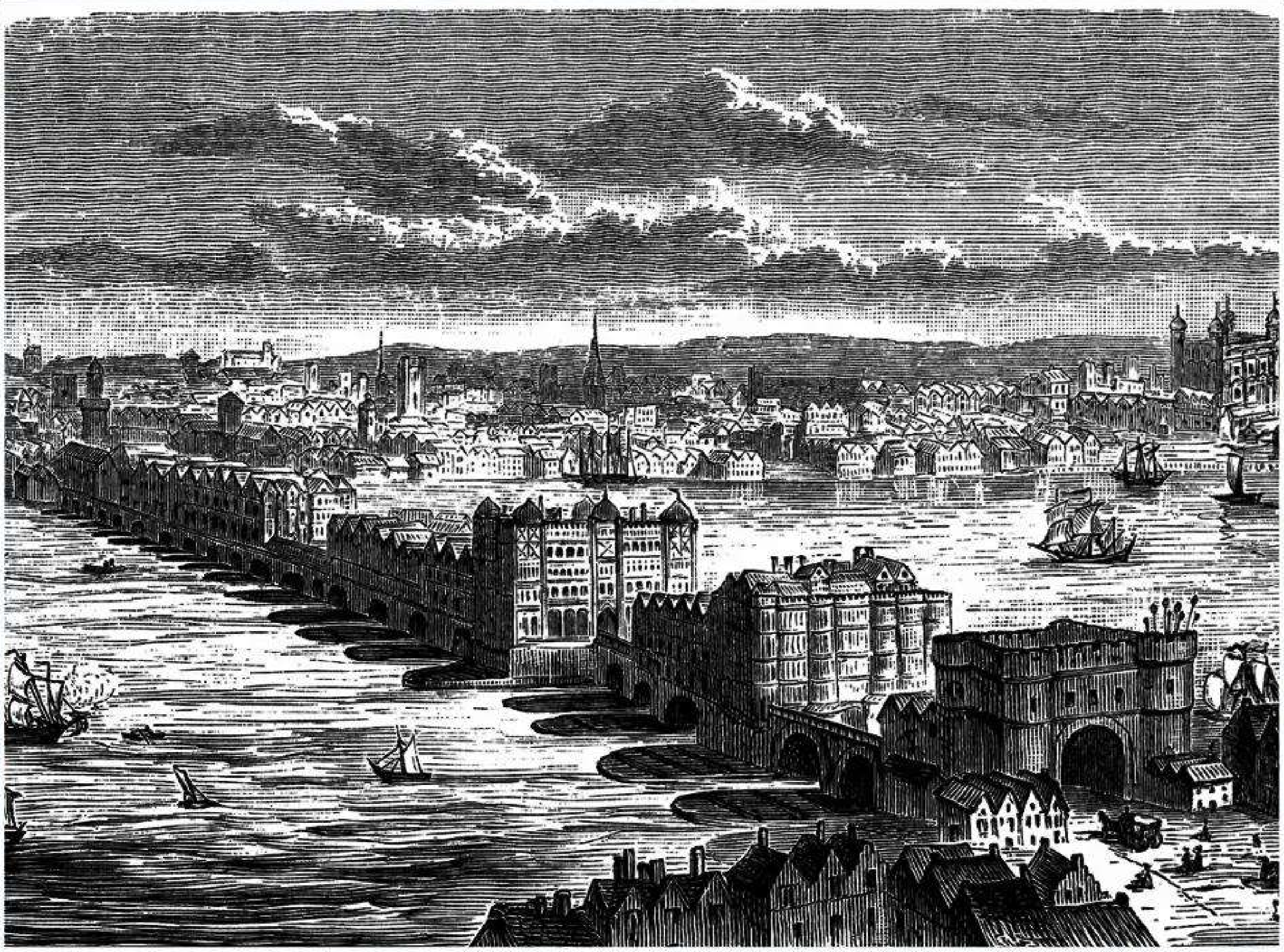
Hauntings and Folklore

HAUNTED THAMES

The hauntings, myths and folklore born from the dark past of the Thames



THE SCREAMING STAIRS OF LONDON BRIDGE

For centuries, boatmen passing beneath London Bridge after dark spoke of screams rising above the water. The sounds were said to come from the stone gatehouse where the severed heads of prisoners once stood on iron spikes. At night, when the tide turned and the current rushed through the bridge's narrow arches, the wind created eerie, human-like cries that echoed across the River Thames. Some believed these were not tricks of air or stone, but the restless voices of the executed men denied burial and left to rot above the Thames as a warning. Even after the heads were removed and the bridge rebuilt, reports of these voices persisted. Ferrymen claimed the river "remembered" what had happened there, and that the dead still announced themselves when the tide was right.

THE RIVER GHOSTS OF EXECUTION DOCK

Execution Dock was where pirates and smugglers met their end, hanged over the Thames as the tide rose beneath them. Tradition demanded they be left suspended until three tides had passed, their bodies slowly claimed by the river. Locals later reported seeing shadowy figures drifting near the waterline, especially at low tide, when the mudbanks were exposed. These 'river ghosts' were said to appear headless or twisted, swaying as if still caught in the noose. Some even claimed to hear splashing footsteps where no one walked, or ropes creaking in the dark. Even today, night fishermen and riverside residents speak of an oppressive atmosphere here, a sense that the condemned never truly left the river that killed them.

THE PHANTOM BARGE OF THE THAMES

Among one of the oldest tales told by the Thames watermen is that of a black, unlit barge seen drifting silently against the tide. Those who claimed to see it said the boat carried no crew, yet it moved with purpose, drifting through the fog without any sound. All attempts to follow it always failed and the barge would slip into the mist or vanish beneath the bridges. Folklore suggests it appears before tragedy, like an eerie omen of what is to come. Its sightings were often reported shortly before a drowning, collision or the discovery of a body along the riverbanks. In earlier centuries, it was thought to carry the souls of those who died on the river, bound for no earthly shore. Modern sightings are rare, but the legend persists, passed quietly among those who know the Thames best.

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REMEMBERED IN SMITHFIELD

On 15 July 2015, a carved triptych memorial to the Peasants' Revolt was unveiled along the northern wall of St Bart's Hospital in Smithfield, where memorials to other people and events in history reside.

THE PEASANTS' REVOLT

Discontent among the people fuelled the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, a brief but profound period of unrest in English history

In the wake of the Black Death that claimed millions of lives across Europe in the mid-14th century, social and economic upheaval brought class struggle to the forefront in England a generation later. As much as a third of the population of Europe died during the reign of the dreaded disease, and though life in Medieval England would never fully return to its prior bucolic condition, the persistent shortages of manpower and food that came as a result of the disease were very real.

Economically motivated to take advantage of the labour shortage, English peasants, or serfs (often indentured to the landed gentry and considered little more than chattel property), demanded higher wages for their work. In response, the government enacted the Statute of Labourers in 1351, fixing wages at pre-Black Death levels and making it illegal to break a pre-existing contract. While the price of goods had risen steadily, fixed wages fostered diminished buying power among the peasants. In addition, England had been deeply involved in the Hundred Years' War. The cost of the conflict weighed heavily on the national treasury and by 1377, the government had levied a new poll tax, essentially a duty to be paid by every adult in the realm. Unlike other taxes, the poll tax was to be paid by both the wealthy and the poor.

The chief proponent of the poll tax was John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, foremost among the class of barons that wielded real political power. King Edward III had died in 1377; his son, Edward - The Black Prince - preceded him in death a year earlier. Therefore Richard II, son of the Black Prince, ascended to the crown at just ten.

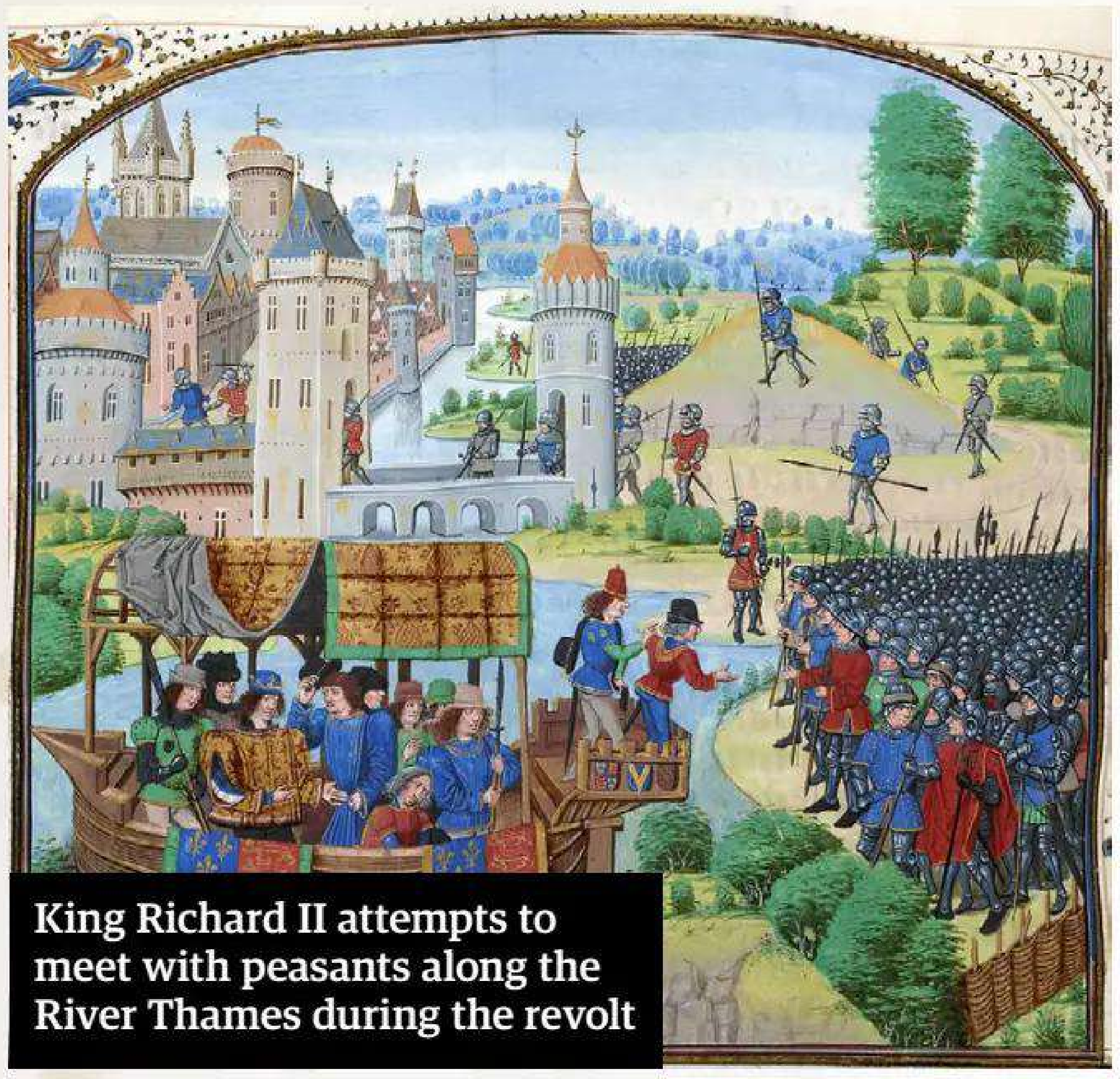
The plight of the peasants reached fever pitch as the position of the Church became apparent. The Church was a principal landowner in England, and to line their own coffers, its leaders, the Archbishop of Canterbury and prelates across the countryside, actually aligned themselves with

> *"While the price of goods had risen steadily, fixed wages fostered diminished buying power among the peasants"*

the barons. The common people were enraged and turned against the Church. An outspoken dissenter was the priest John Ball, who railed against the institution's excesses and its betrayal of the people. Ball was arrested and held in Maidstone Castle.

The magnitude of the peasants' discontent was recognised in the dwindling sums of poll tax collections in successive years. While some peasants did not have the means to pay, others refused. When tax collectors rode into villages and summoned the people to render payment, they just stayed away. By 1380, the decline in revenue was quite noticeable. John of Gaunt sent his agents out a second time to gather funds in full.

One of these agents, Thomas Bampton, travelled to Brentwood in Essex to discharge his duty. On 30 May 1381, Bampton called the peasants from the nearby villages of Fobbing, Stanford and Corningham to assemble, and demanded payment. Those who had already paid and were obliged to do so a second time were angered. They were also required to pay the taxes of those who refused to appear. The following day, Bampton and his entourage were set upon. Three were killed, and the others barely escaped the disturbance with their lives. Days later, Sir Robert Belknap, chief justice of the Court of Common Pleas, was in Essex at the time and was also driven away.


King Richard II attempts to meet with peasants along the River Thames during the revolt

Within days, the uprising gained momentum. In Kent, Norfolk, Suffolk and Hertfordshire, peasants attacked tax collectors, manor homes and church properties. Essex and Kent became the epicentre of the gathering storm. Rioters seized Maidstone Castle, releasing John Ball on 7 June. Three days later, a mob from Kent marched into Canterbury and held services in the Cathedral, installing a humble monk as 'Archbishop' while the actual leader of the Church was in London.

"They immediately set fire to the Savoy Palace and burned other buildings"

Wat Tyler of Kent emerged as a leader of the burgeoning rebellion, and soon the peasants, their number estimated up to 100,000, were on the march towards London. The Essex demonstrators reached the capital on 12 June, and camped at Mile End, north of the River Thames just beyond Aldgate. A day later, the protestors from Kent reached Blackheath. The march apparently took authorities in London by surprise. King Richard evacuated Windsor and took refuge in the Tower of London. He responded to a message from the rebels, agreeing to meet them at Rotherhithe on the Thames that day. However, his advisors were alarmed at the sight of the huge gathering and would not allow the monarch to make landfall.

By this time, the sympathetic poor of London opened the gates of the city and the crossing of London Bridge to allow the marchers entry into the city streets. They immediately set fire to the Savoy Palace, home of John of Gaunt, and burned other buildings associated with their oppressors. On 14 June, the 14-year-old King Richard met with the Essex peasants at Mile End. He agreed to a list of demands that would apparently curb the existing abuses, authorising the granting of charters to such effect.

Nevertheless, the unrest continued. One angry mob stormed the Tower of London and dragged Simon Sudbury, the archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Hales, the crown's treasurer, and John Legge, originator of the poll tax, to nearby Tower Hill, where the trio was promptly beheaded.

Twickenham, Cheswick and Clapham, villages on the outskirts of London, were sacked and put to the torch. Elsewhere, prisons were opened, and legal documents were burned.

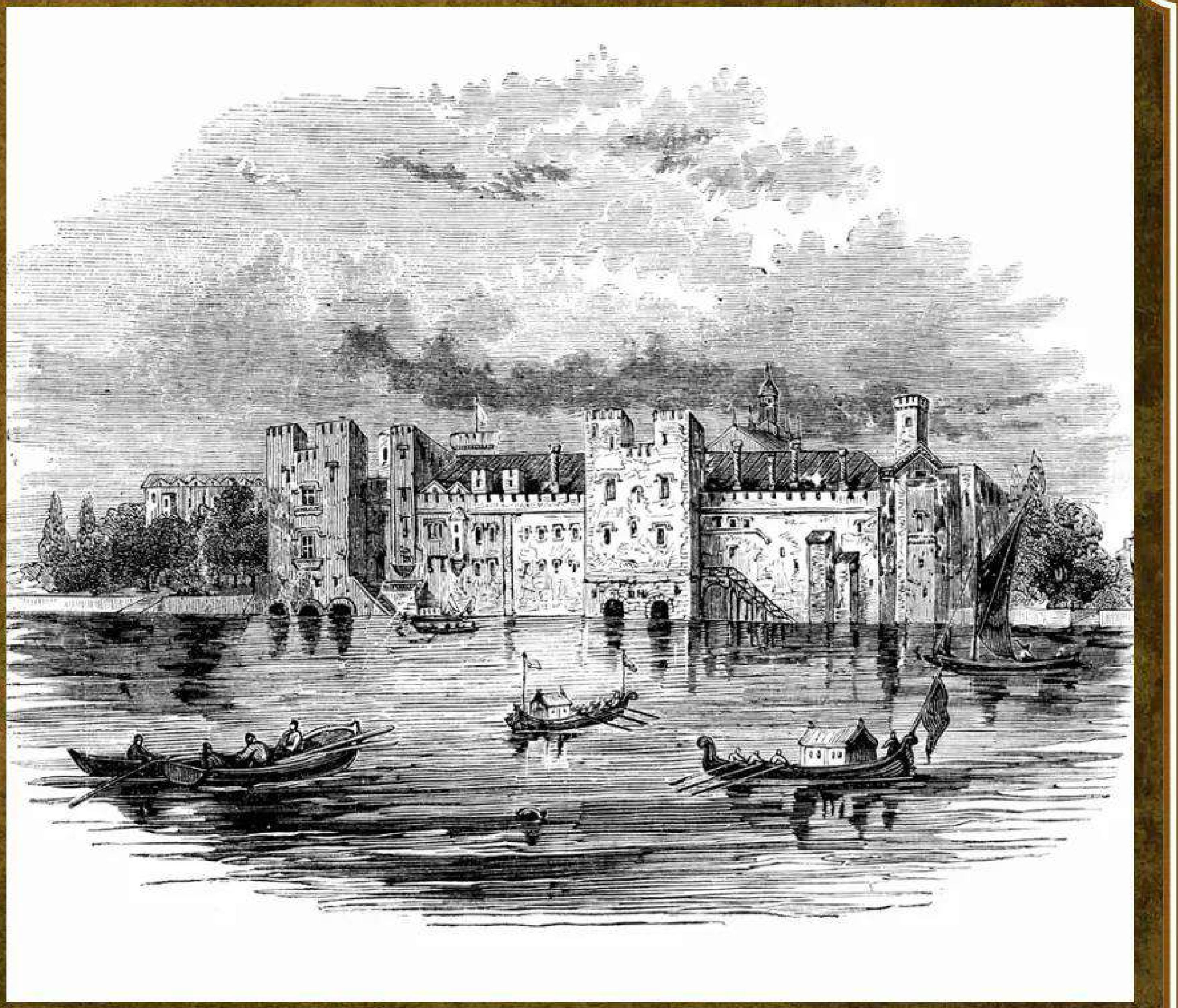
Although some peasants were satisfied with King Richard's response and headed back to their villages, a diehard cluster led by Wat Tyler remained sceptical, and sought to impose additional demands on the crown.

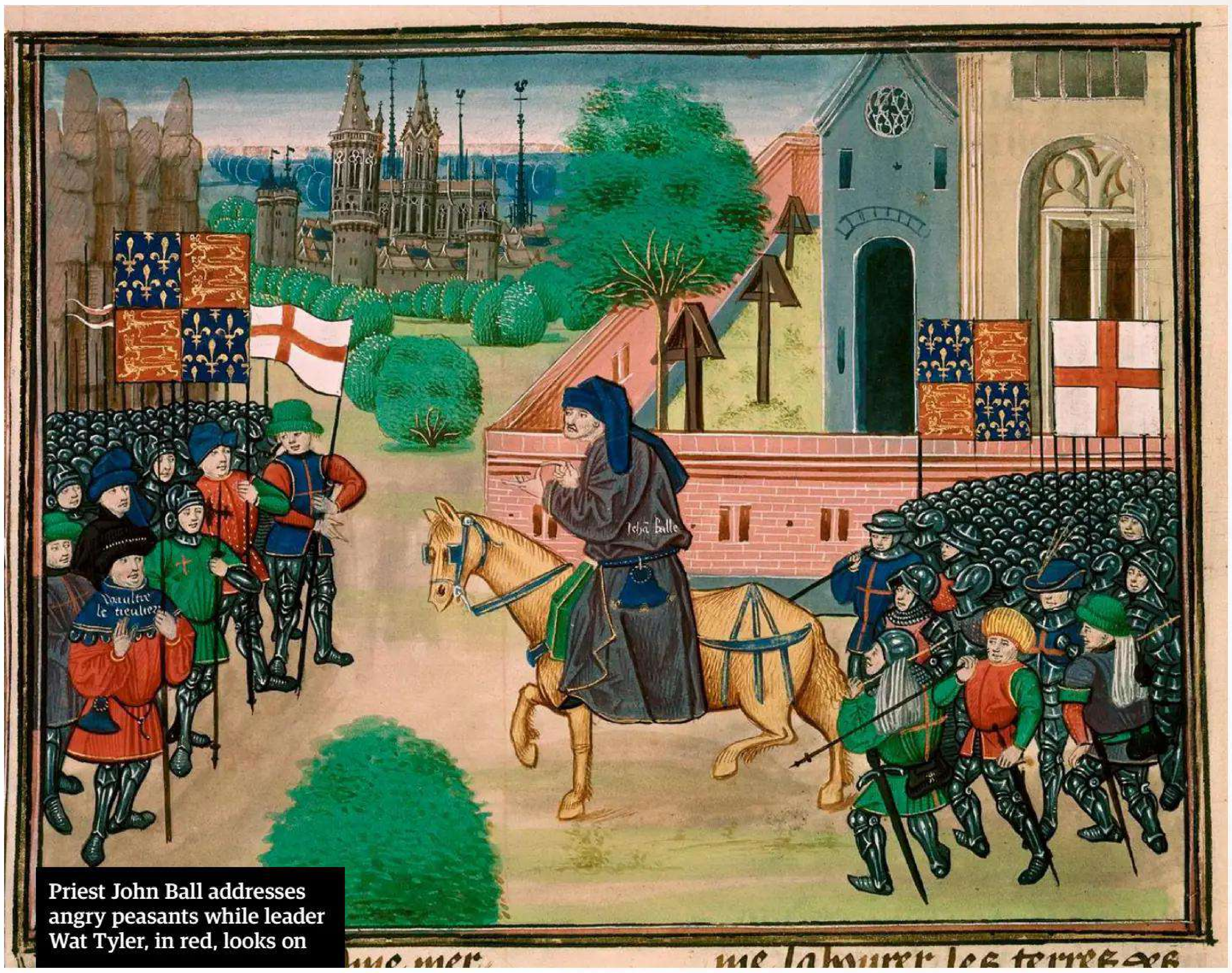
King Richard agreed to meet Tyler and his cohorts at Smithfield within the walls of the capital city. The meeting was tense and reached the brink of open warfare when Tyler apparently refused to dismount and show respect for the king, supposedly spitting in the monarch's direction and speaking insolently. William Walworth, lord mayor of London, pulled Tyler from his horse and hacked at the rebel leader with his sword. It is unclear whether Walworth or one of his attendants delivered the death blow, but as Tyler lay motionless, the king showed tremendous presence of mind for one so young

THE SAVOY THEATRE AND HOTEL ROSE FROM THE ASHES

A prominent casualty of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, the Savoy Palace was a symbol of the rich, royal and powerful in Medieval England. At the time of the revolt, the palace was the home of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. Gaunt had inherited the estate to the north of London, which had been constructed after a land grant from King Henry III in 1246. During the next century, the road from London to the area known as the Strand, where the Savoy Palace stood, was paved, and the Savoy became the most opulent and notable home among those of contemporary noblemen in England.

During the Peasants' Revolt, the Savoy Palace was ransacked and burned. Its rich tapestries were torched, jewellery and other trappings of wealth were destroyed, and furnishings were thrown into the Thames. Although the palace was devastated, the area retained the name of Savoy. In the early 16th century, the Savoy Hospital was founded. It operated for two centuries, and fire destroyed much of the complex. The property lay dormant for years until Richard D'Oyly Carte, who became wealthy as the producer of Gilbert and Sullivan operas, opened the Savoy Theatre in the 1880s. The Savoy Hotel, billed as the most famous in London, followed.




Priest John Ball addresses angry peasants while leader Wat Tyler, in red, looks on

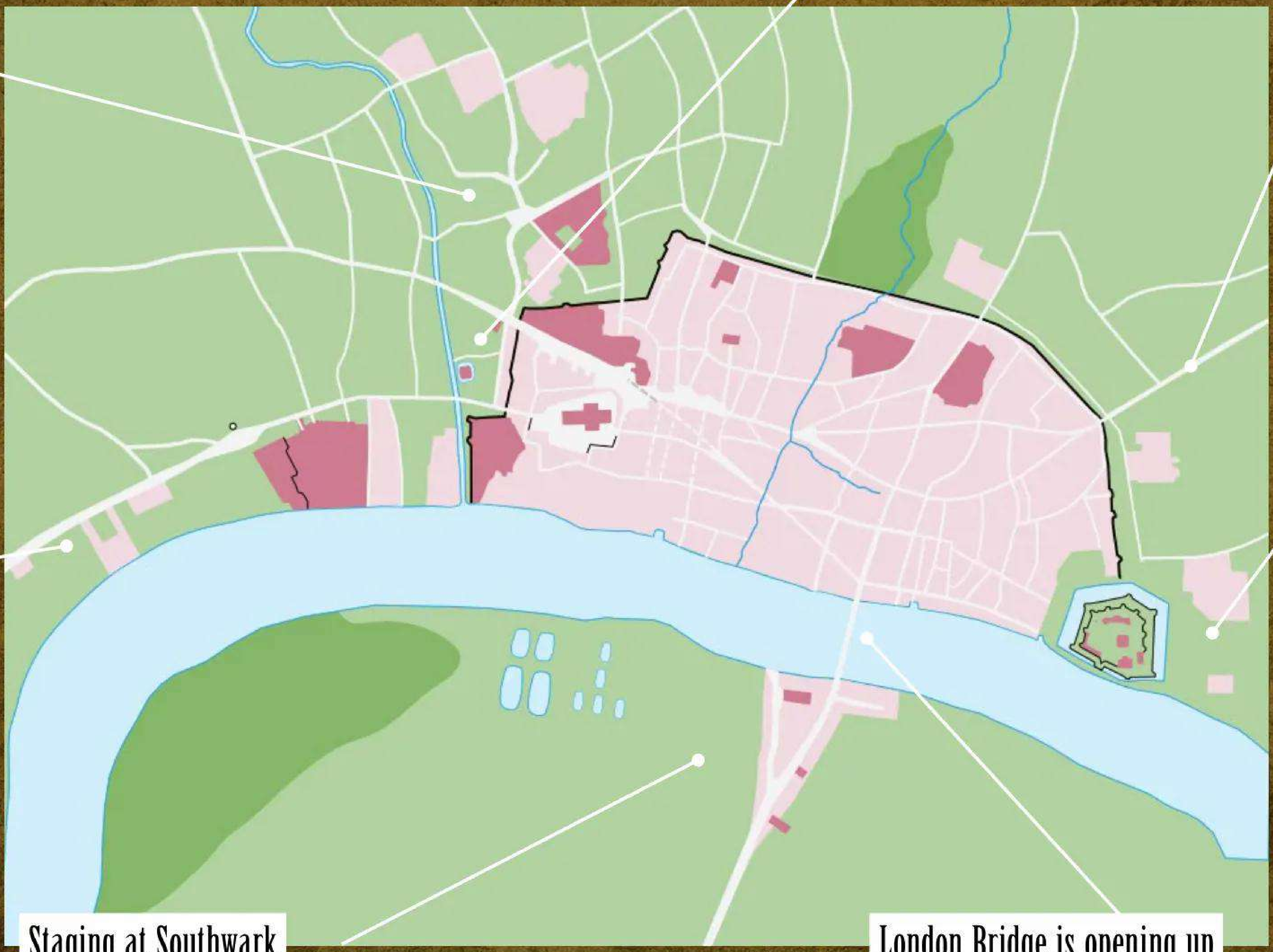
and in such imminent peril. He rode among the peasants and shouted: "I am your captain! Follow me!" Richard led the peasants away from the scene and agreed to their terms, effectively ending the Peasants' Revolt in London.

Many former rebels, assured that their charters and promises of clemency would prevent retribution, returned to their homes. However, a call was issued for troops to rally and pacify the countryside. As soldiers restored order, some of those who held charters were executed. John Ball was arrested at St Albans. King Richard witnessed his execution – hanged, drawn and quartered – in the village marketplace. As many as 1,500 peasants were put to death.

The Peasants' Revolt, which had lasted less than a month, was soon quelled. Although the charters were refuted – the king stated he had been coerced into making agreements with the protesters – and in many ways life for the peasants returned to the status quo, the poll tax was never again levied and the institution of serfdom had suffered significant damage.

PEASANTS ASSAIL POINTS ACROSS LONDON

The areas that became part of the action



London spared at Smithfield

On 15 June 1381, London is spared further violence as King Richard II quiets a gathering of peasants at Smithfield despite the killing of their leader, Wat Tyler, and leads them out of the city.

Prison cells spring open

While unrest rolls across London, angry peasants launch attacks on the Newgate and Fleet prisons, burning buildings and setting some prisoners free during a wave of violence that also threatens foreigners in the city.

Essex meets Mile End

Angry peasants from Essex reach the city of London on 12 June 1381, camping at Mile End. Two days later, King Richard II meets with them and promises to accede to their demands.

Savoy Palace is ravaged

Symbolic of the wealthy and aristocratic class that oppressed them, Savoy Palace, the home of John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, is put to the torch by enraged peasants during the 1381 revolt.

Terror at the Tower of London

Once King Richard's refuge, the Tower of London is stormed by peasants on 14 June 1381. Three prominent Church and government leaders are dragged to nearby Tower Hill and then promptly beheaded.

Staging at Southwark

After King Richard II's failed foray to Rotherhithe on the Thames, peasants gather at Southwark, begin to stir, and make their way towards London Bridge, one of several gateways into the streets of the capital city.

London Bridge is opening up

On the afternoon of 13 June 1381, peasants advance from their camp at Southwark and approach London Bridge, confronting its defences, which are opened from within to allow their entry into the city's streets.

THE GREAT PLAGUE OF LONDON

The Great Plague swept through London in 1665, leaving devastation in its wake and almost a quarter of the population dead

The Great Plague came to London in 1665, and raged for 18 long, punishing months. It wasn't the first time the plague had raged in the English capital during the four decades of the second pandemic, but it was no less devastating for that.

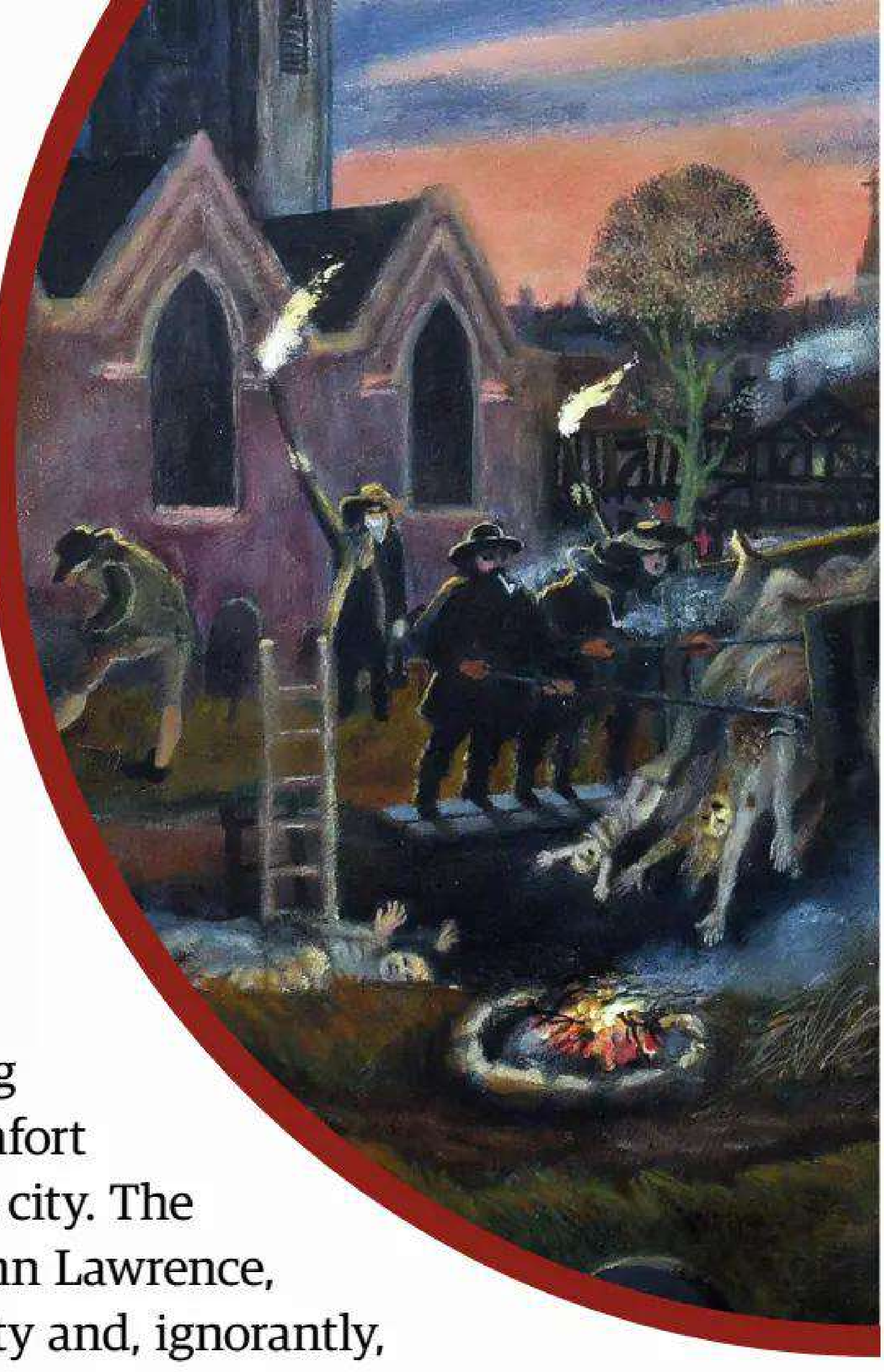
London first battled the plague in 1348, and in the centuries that followed, Europe endured sporadic outbreaks of the deadly disease. Three hundred years after that initial outbreak, perhaps Londoners had thought themselves safe, but they were anything but. The Great Plague of London was the last major outbreak of the Black Death in England to date, and it was catastrophic.

When a comet darted across the night sky in 1664, the people of England looked up in terror, wondering what horrors it might herald. Trapped in an increasingly industrial city steeped in its own filth, where tenements tottered over the sewage-ridden streets and the stench of dirt and death was commonplace, the half a million inhabitants of London were sadly used to disease, but as the years had passed, outbreaks of the dreaded plague had decreased to such a number that they had become virtually inconsequential.

This was a city that was used to death, but when reports of continental plague outbreaks began to filter across to England, the Privy Council met to discuss what was necessary to ensure that the disease could not reach their country. Desperate to keep the plague at bay, a programme of quarantining ships that had come from infected countries was immediately put into action. For those who had recently come ashore before those measures were introduced, there was to be no escaping quarantine, and they were confined to their homes for 40 days.

When news reached England that the Dutch Republic was heavily infected, authorities

> *"The Great Plague of London was the last major outbreak of the Back Death in England to date, and it was catastrophic"*



moved to include all Dutch ships in its quarantine. Tens of thousands in Amsterdam had fallen victim to the plague in the previous 12 months but everyone hoped that the government's decisive action would ensure it didn't gain a foothold in England again. However, when death rates began to climb in the poverty-stricken district of St Giles in the early months of 1665, it was clear that the quarantine had failed. The Black Death had returned.

Around the docks and in St Giles, houses began to be sealed, a red cross daubed on the door as a sign of infection. Conditions in the area were already dire and the people panicked, rioting as their neighbourhood was forced into isolation and pesthouses were constructed, intended to quarantine the thousands of people it was predicted would fall victim to the dreaded lurgy.

> "Bodies began to pile up in the streets or on the mounds in the plague pits"

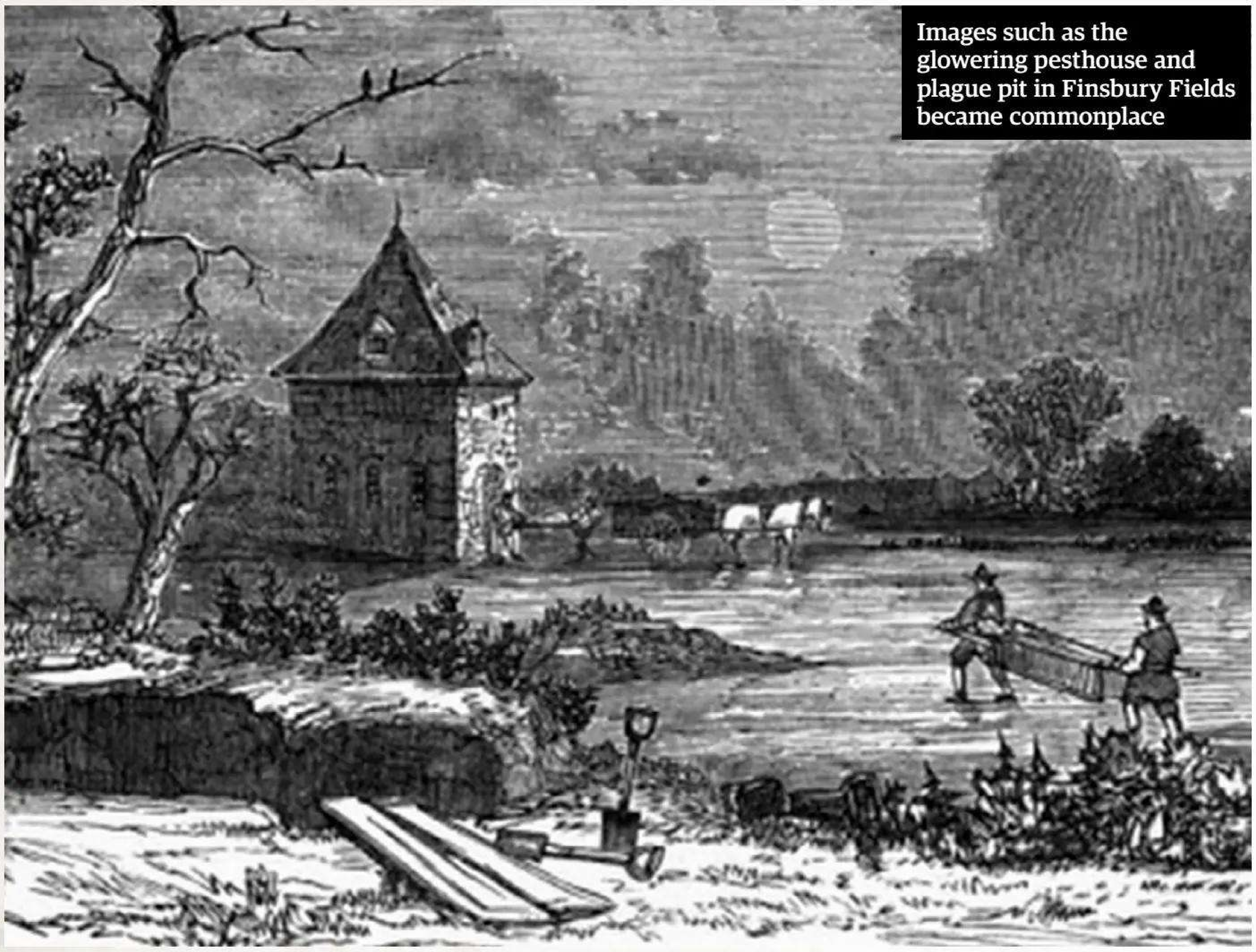
As the weeks passed, a handful of cases became a few dozen clustered outside the city, but with each new death they crept closer until, finally, one was reported within the city walls. With that fatality, there could be no question that the plague was posing a threat to the city itself. Once again, the Privy Council met, and once again it seemed as though quarantine measures were the answer or, more likely, the only option available to the government.

Cleaning up the filth in the streets was a battle that was doomed to fail, yet public meeting places such as taverns were closed down to discourage large groups of people from gathering together and increasing the risk of the infection spreading. With every passing day, London was living in terror of each new death, and for those who could afford to do so, escape began to look like an attractive alternative to staying in the plague-infested capital. Leaving wouldn't be easy though – a person had to be able to show a certificate signed by the Lord Mayor that testified to their good health. These certificates were difficult to obtain for the poor, who were essentially condemned to face the contagion or battle starvation as they made the exhausting journey on foot in search of sanctuary.

In July, 3,000 people died in London, 2,000 of whom fell victim to the plague. It was the final straw for King Charles II, and he instructed his entire court to move to Salisbury. Later they would travel on to Oxford, keeping one step ahead of the disease, but many could not afford to make their escape. The streets filled with a panicked exodus of people who had left everything behind to escape the plague-ridden confines of London. Industry ground to a halt, and shops and public spaces closed down, leaving London a ghost town.

Dead-carts, priests and plague doctors stalked the streets, clearing the dead, tending the dying and attempting to bring some spiritual comfort to those left in the city. The Lord Mayor, Sir John Lawrence, remained in the city and, ignorantly, the government ordered an extermination of cats and dogs, leaving the plague-carrying rats free to swarm through the streets. Those who remained were prevented from starvation with food brought in from surrounding farmland, payment for which was thrown into a bucket of water, a prevention measure intended to clean off any germs that the coins might be carrying.

The once teeming, vibrant English capital was now a city of the dead. Plague pits were dug to accommodate the sheer number of corpses, which were gathered up each evening once night fell. Soon the dead-carts were overwhelmed. Bodies began to pile up in the streets, where they



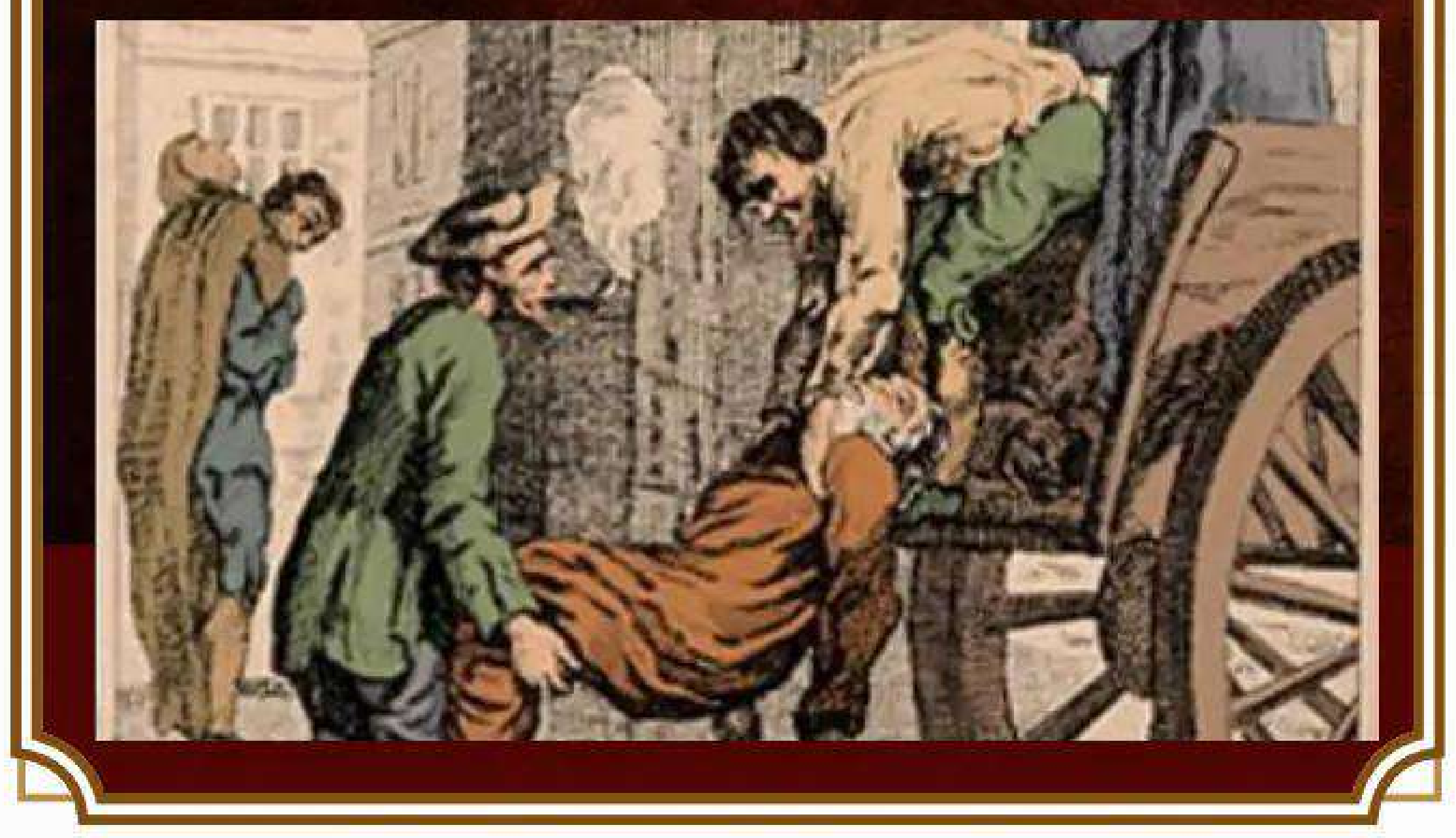
Images such as the glowering pesthouse and plague pit in Finsbury Fields became commonplace

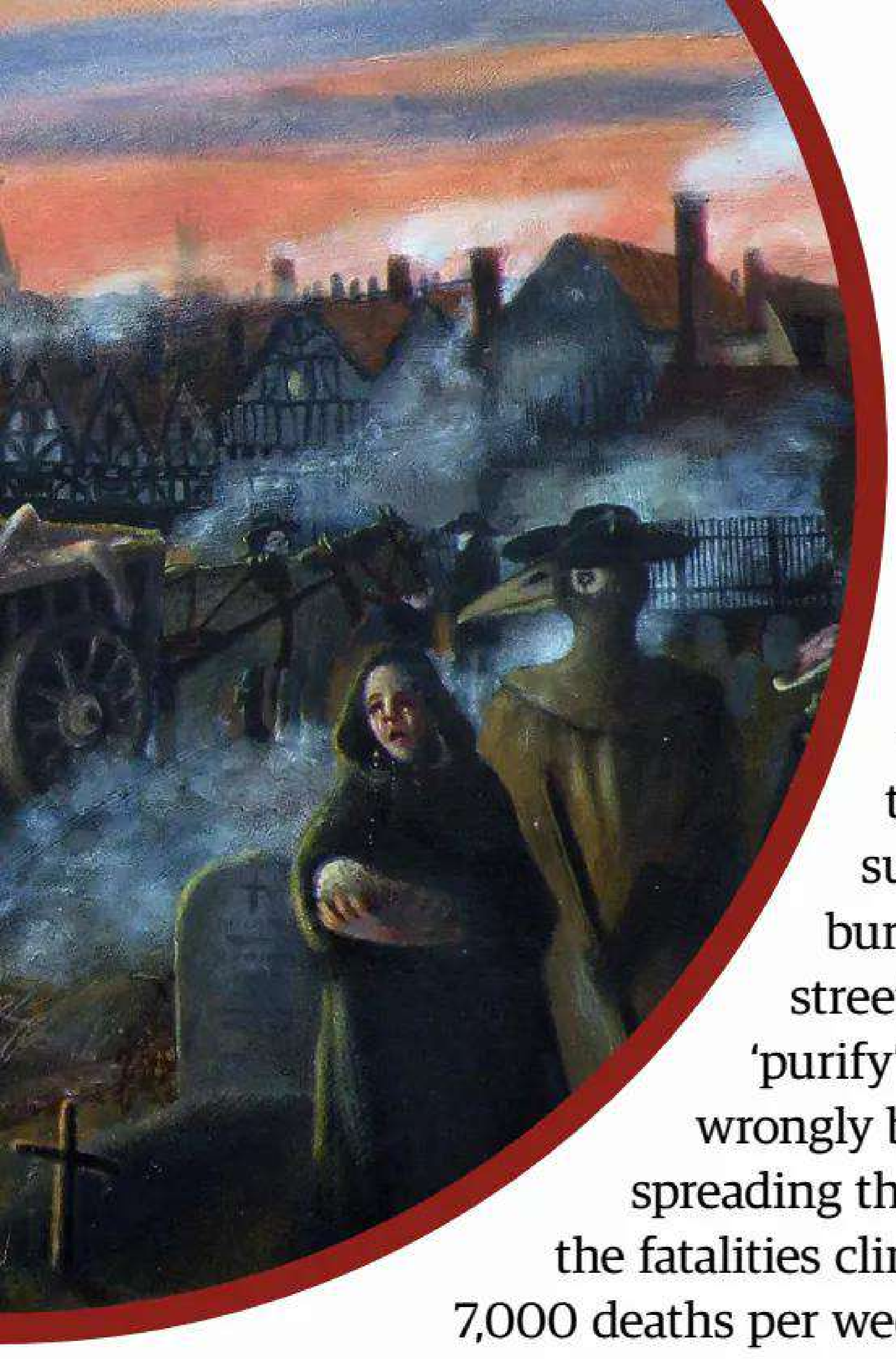
THE BLACK DEATH

The Black Death remains one of the most infamous pandemics in the history of the world. From its birthplace in central Asia, it spread across the continental mainland and all the way to England and beyond, claiming as many as 200 million lives.

Once believed to be caused by anything from bad air to God's wrath against the sinners of the world, we now know that the disease was actually carried by flea-infested rats, meaning those culls of cats and dogs during the Great Plague of London only helped the disease to spread. The Black Death was actually a variant of the bubonic plague caused by the bacterium Yersinia pestis, and it first came to Europe in 1346. Over the next 500 years there were three plague pandemics, with the infection most commonly typified by symptomatic buboes that are the most well-known sign of the Black Death.

Although uncommon today, cases of plague are still reported sporadically across the world. However, modern treatments are effective at treating the infection. If the plague bacterium mutates, of course, that could all change.





decomposed and festered throughout the long, hot summer. Fires burned on every street corner to 'purify' the air that was wrongly believed to be spreading the disease, and the fatalities climbed, peaking at 7,000 deaths per week in September.

It must have seemed as though the apocalypse had come to London but, as autumn drew in, the death tolls recorded on the Bills of Mortality began to fall. The worst was over and, against all the odds, London had endured.

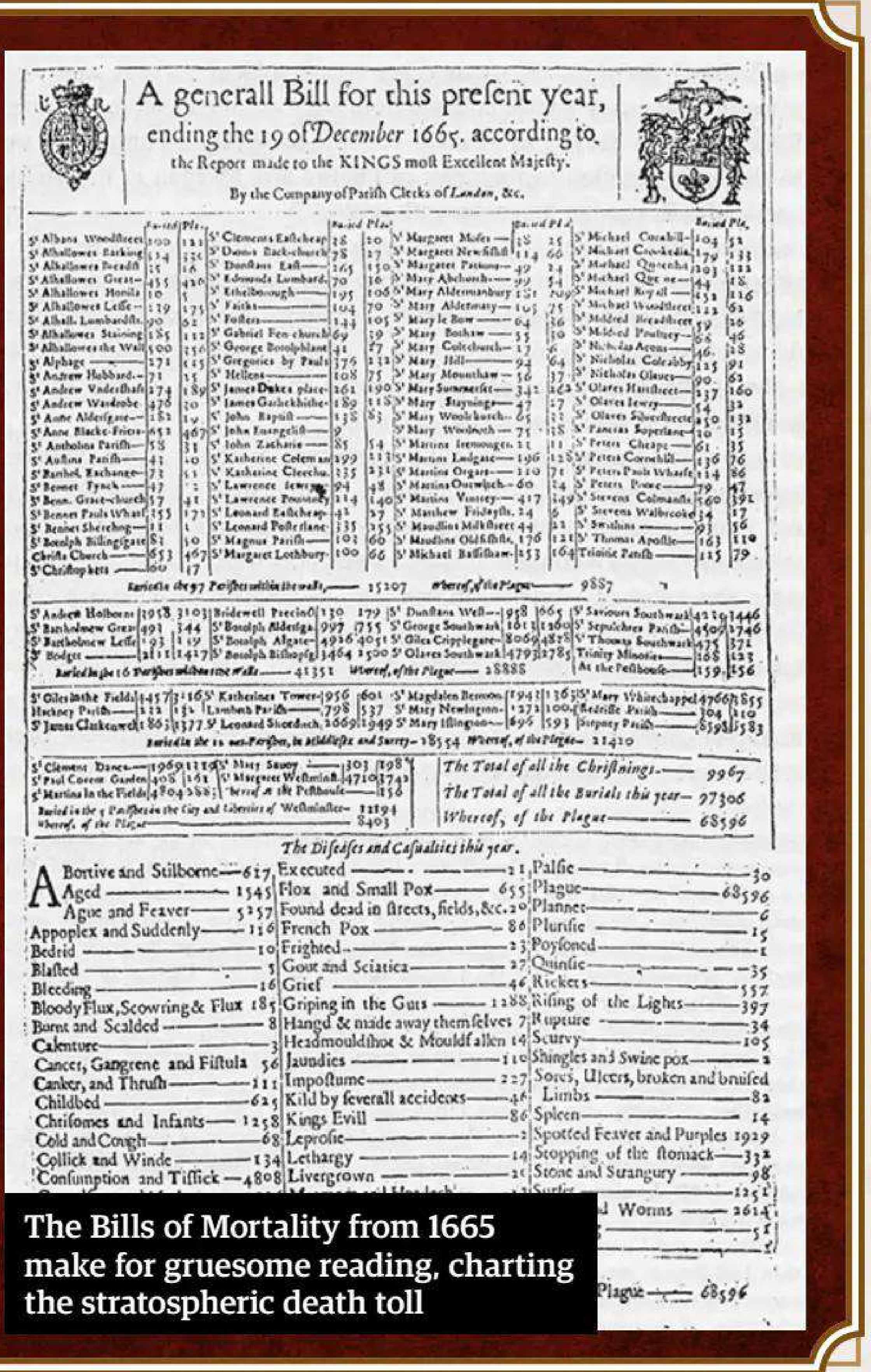
The court returned in February 1666, and following in the king's wake were the rich and powerful. As normality began to slowly return to London, the city came to life once more. The taverns rang with laughter again, the docks and industrial centres fired back into action, shops and business put up signs declaring they were open, and the streets – once full of so much death – breathed life anew.

COUNTING UP THE COST

London was far from the worst casualty of the Great Plague, and all across England, survivors were left to rebuild their shattered land. They did so with admirable speed and skill, and since the end of the second pandemic, there has been no further outbreak of the Black Death in Europe. Why the plague petered out we cannot be certain, but improved sanitation and living conditions certainly contributed, as did better nutrition and slow improvements in the standards of medicine and hygiene.

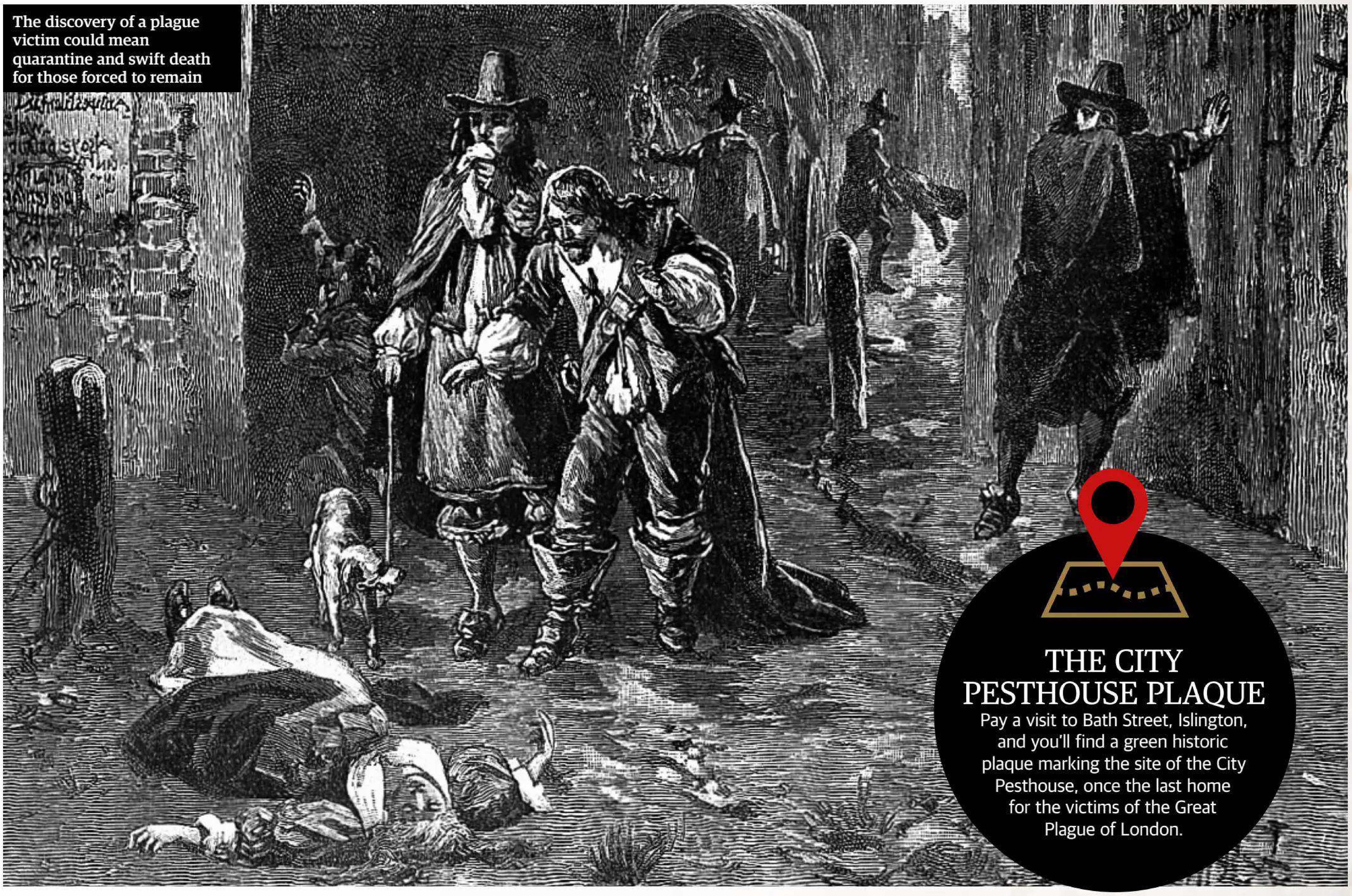
Some give credit to the Great Fire of London, but the capital was far from the only city hit by the contagion, and by the time of the fire, plague deaths were falling at a rapid rate. Whatever the reason for the end of the pandemic, it could not have come soon enough for a city in crisis.

Around three per cent of the country's population died, lower than in any earlier epidemic, though the impact on London was greater than previous outbreaks. Through quarantine, plague and flight, the city had survived. It would not be the last challenge London would face, but the worst was over.



A generall Bill for this preſent year,
ending the 19 of *December* 1665. according to
the Report made to the KINGS moſt Excellent Majeſty.
By the Company of Pariſh Clerks of *London*, &c.

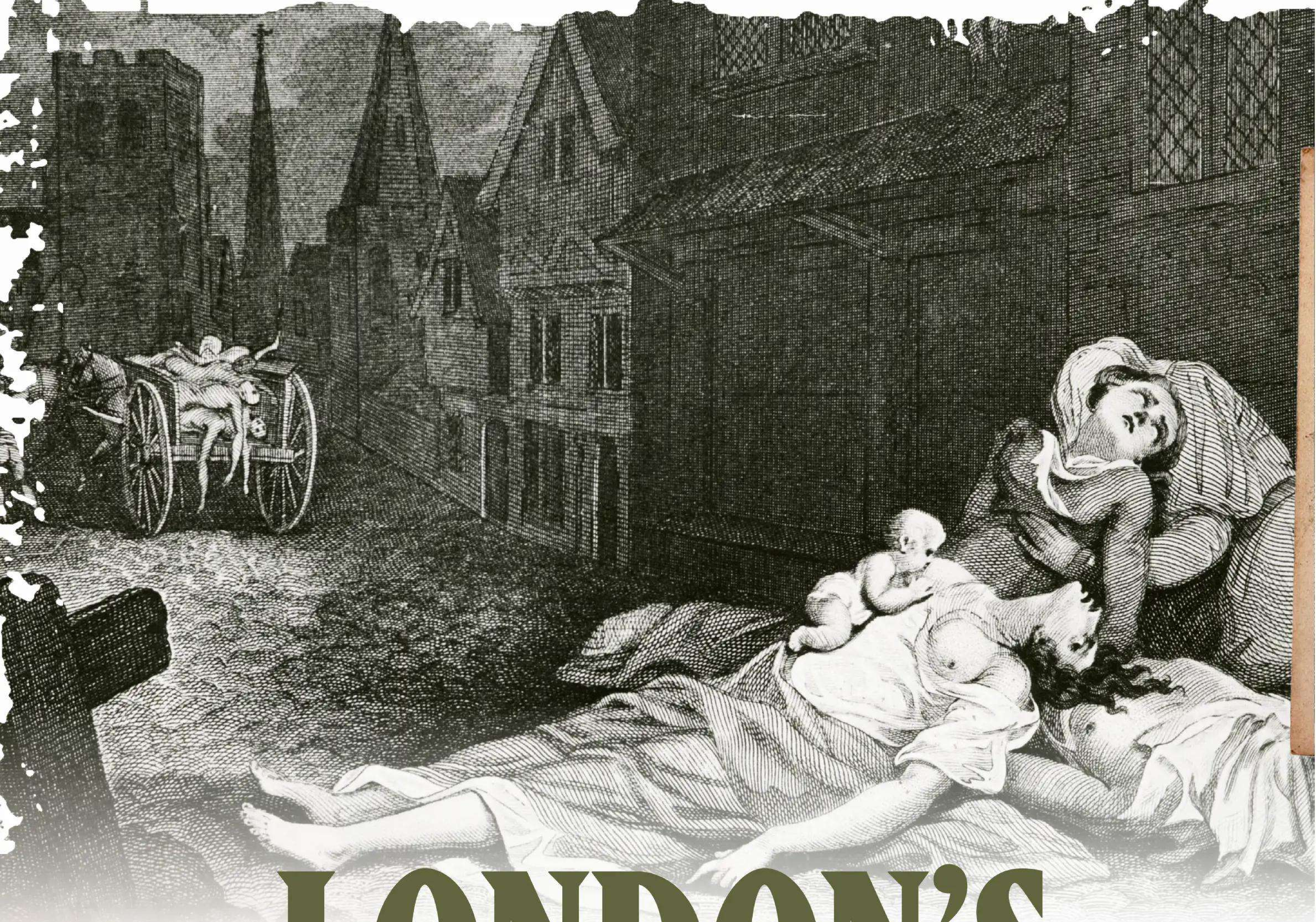
The Bills of Mortality from 1665 make for gruesome reading, charting the stratospheric death toll



The discovery of a plague victim could mean quarantine and swift death for those forced to remain

THE CITY PESTHOUSE PLAQUE

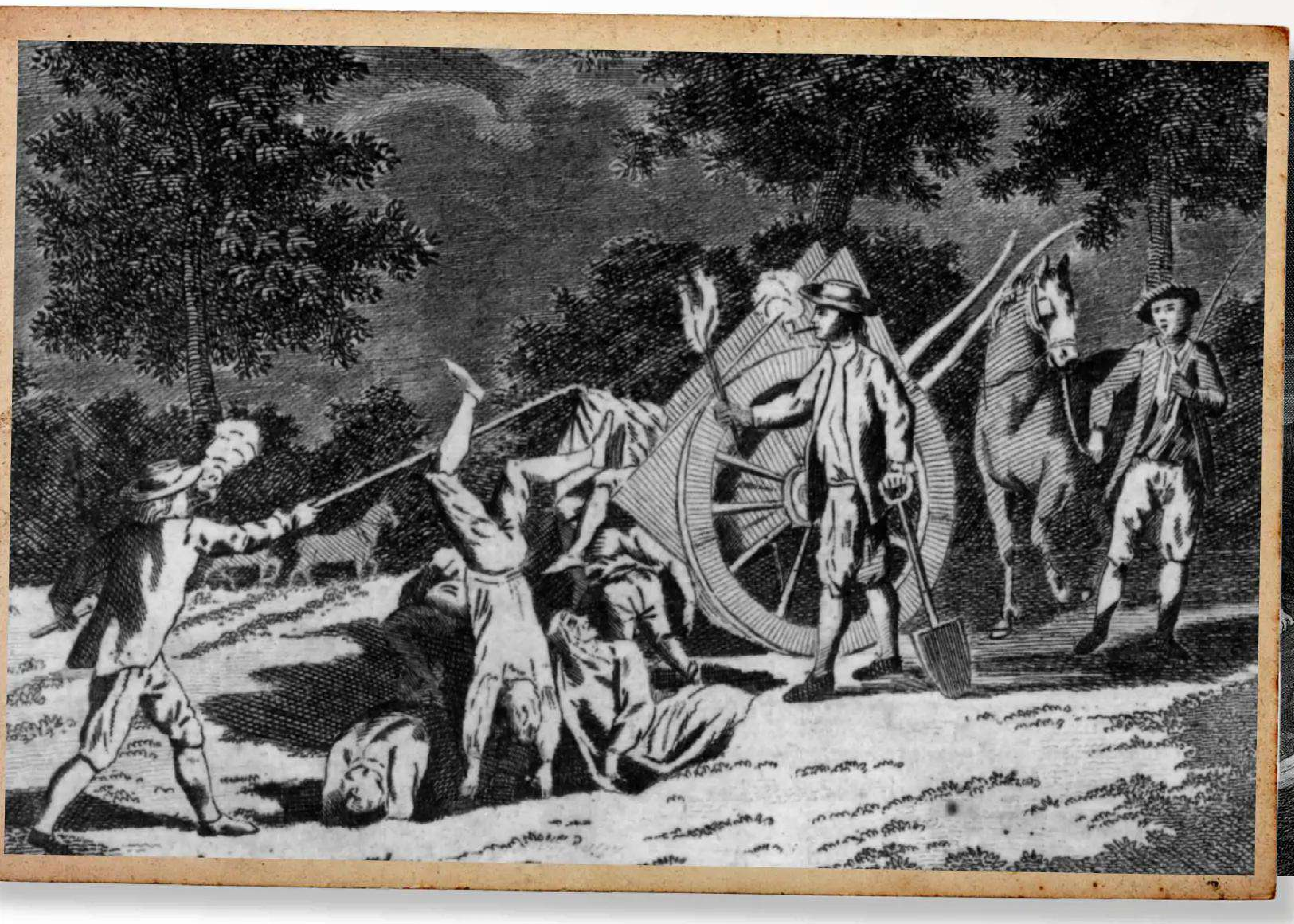
Pay a visit to Bath Street, Islington, and you'll find a green historic plaque marking the site of the City Pesthouse, once the last home for the victims of the Great Plague of London.

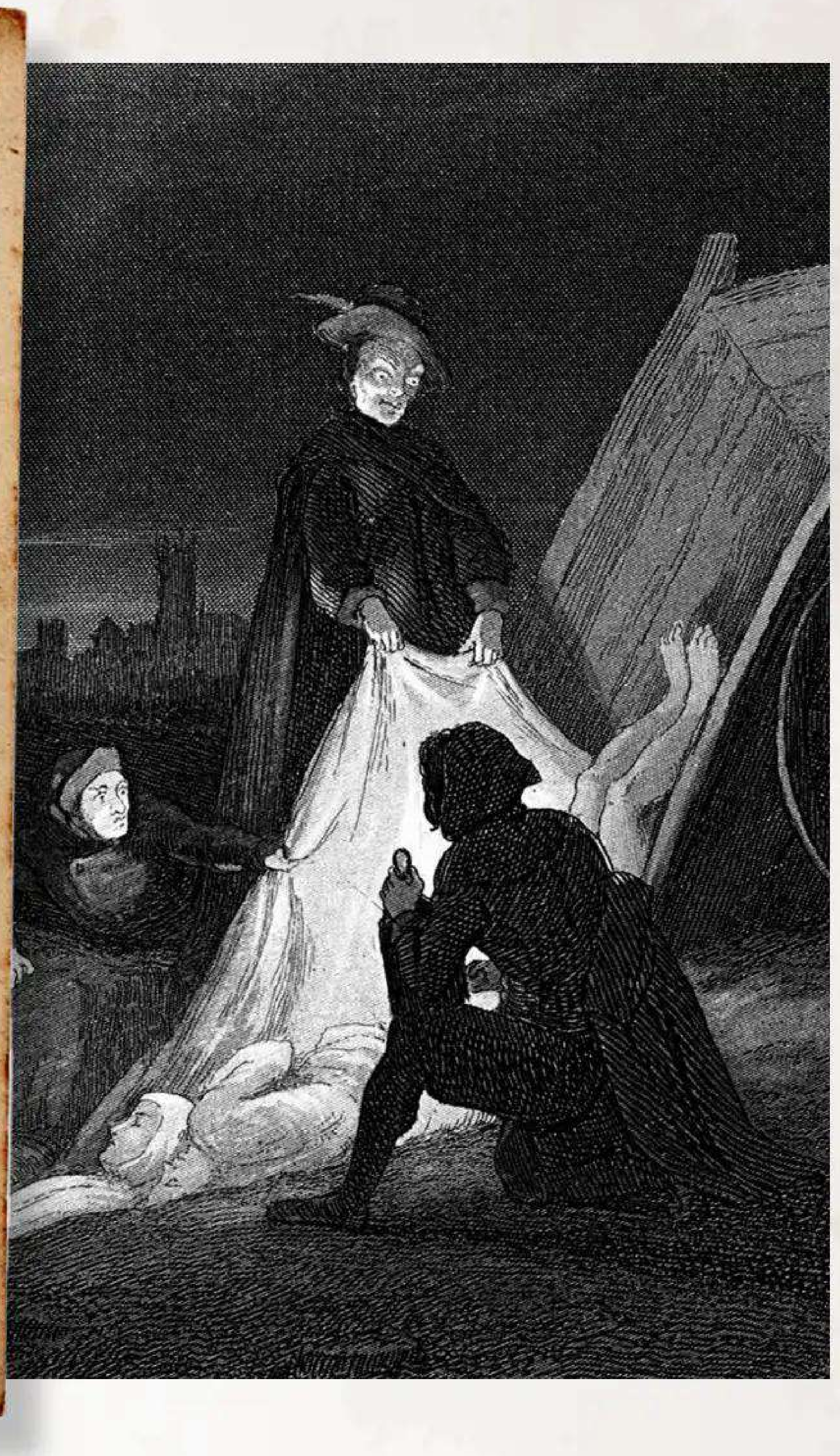


LONDON'S PLAGUE PITS

When the plague hit, London faced a grim and inescapable problem – where do all the bodies go?

Expanding cities have always faced problems regarding the appropriate burial of their dead. When epidemics and plagues hit dense populations, there is no time for funerals and mourning, but the requirement for immediate action to stop the spread of disease. Prior to the development of cemeteries in the 19th century, most people were buried in local churchyards, which were prone to overcrowding. During instances of plague – such as the 14th-century Black Death and 17th-century Great Plague – communities were forced to hastily bury their dead in communal churchyard graves. However, when these graves quickly filled, authorities were forced to rapidly designate other burial sites, often on the rural outskirts of London. These new burial sites were large 'plague pits', where bodies could be quickly interred in huge numbers. During the Great Plague of the 1600s, over 100,000 people in London and its environs died, with whole families thrown into the ground with little ceremony. With a fear of contagion and little knowledge about disease transmission, bodies were buried in an inhumane





way, as 'dead carts' upended piles of corpses into fresh pits.

Due to the speed of the disease's spread, and the usage of the pits by working-class communities, there were little to no official records produced of their location. For centuries, historians have attempted to plot some of London's plague pits and erect memorials to the individuals who died in such circumstances. While many of London's famous landmarks celebrate the memorials of politicians and celebrities, the mass graves of ordinary people go unnoticed and unacknowledged, as a dark thread of unspoken history weaves the city together. Owing to London's urban sprawl, no-one can say how many plague pits are situated within its walls, with estimates into the hundreds. However, those that have been identified, often reveal the fascinating hidden histories of London's working classes and urban poor.

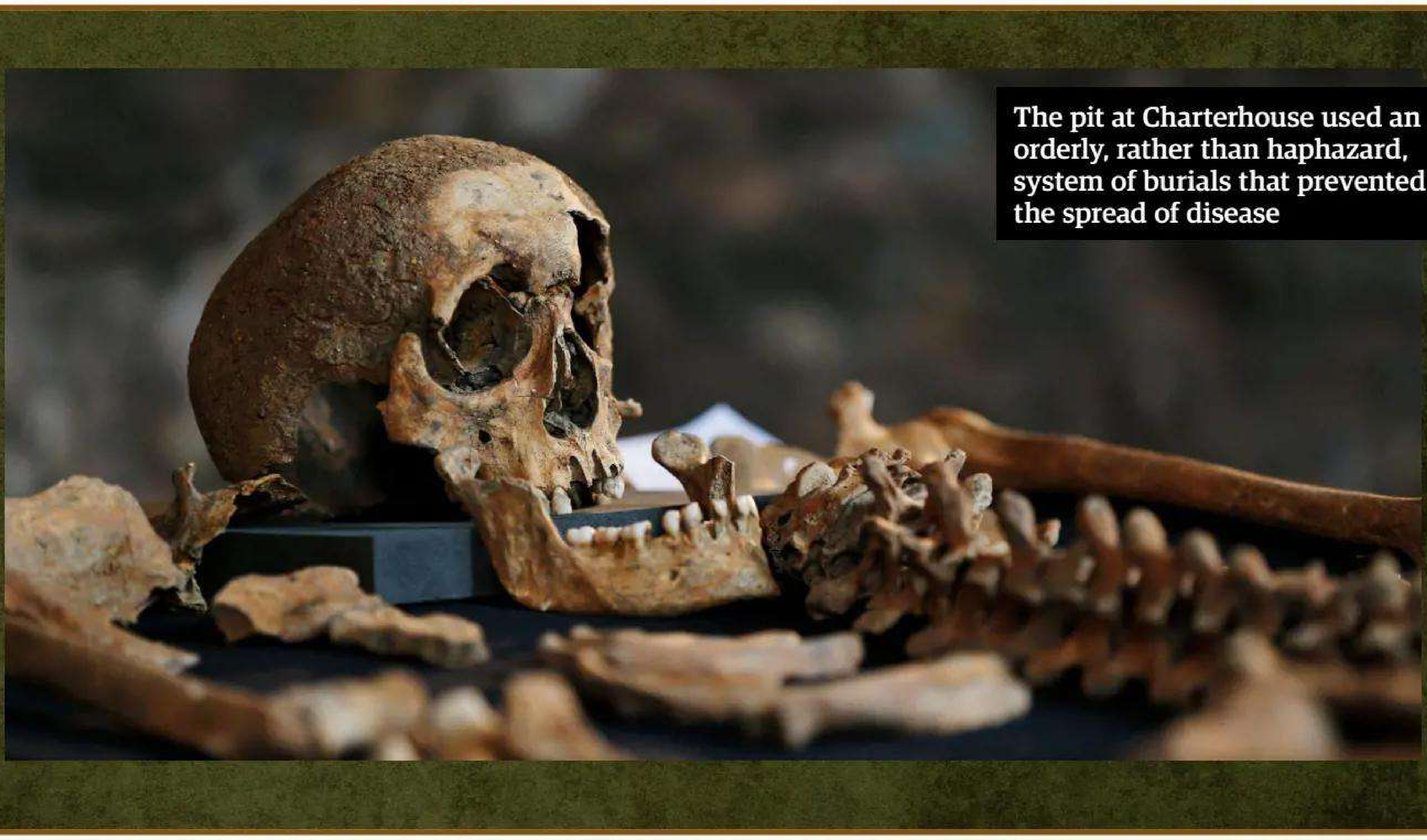
Aldgate Underground Station is the unassuming location of one of London's most infamous plague pits. Recorded in Daniel Defoe's 'A Journal of the Plague Year' (1772), he described the pit as "terrible" and enormous in size, measuring nearly six-metres (20-feet) deep at one end. Upon its discovery in the 1870s, the Aldgate plague pit delayed construction of the station as over 1,000 bodies were found, directly beneath the intended foundations.

The presence of plague pits and unmapped burial sites is a constant issue for city developers, as locations are unknown and construction must be halted for archaeological intervention following the discovery of human remains. In more recent years, the Crossrail railway project discovered 3,500 unmapped burials from the former 'Bethlem Burial Ground', with scientific tests proving that the deceased had all been victims of the plague.

CHARTERHOUSE SQUARE

The largest plague pit in London is believed to hold the remains of approximately 50,000 individuals

Charterhouse Square is home to London's largest plague pit, which was only discovered during Crossrail excavations in 2013. Believed to date from between 1348-50, many remains were tested by archaeologists, the results of which revealed insights as to the lifestyles, origins and diets of the deceased. It was also understood that burials had occurred in three waves, following successive outbreaks of disease.



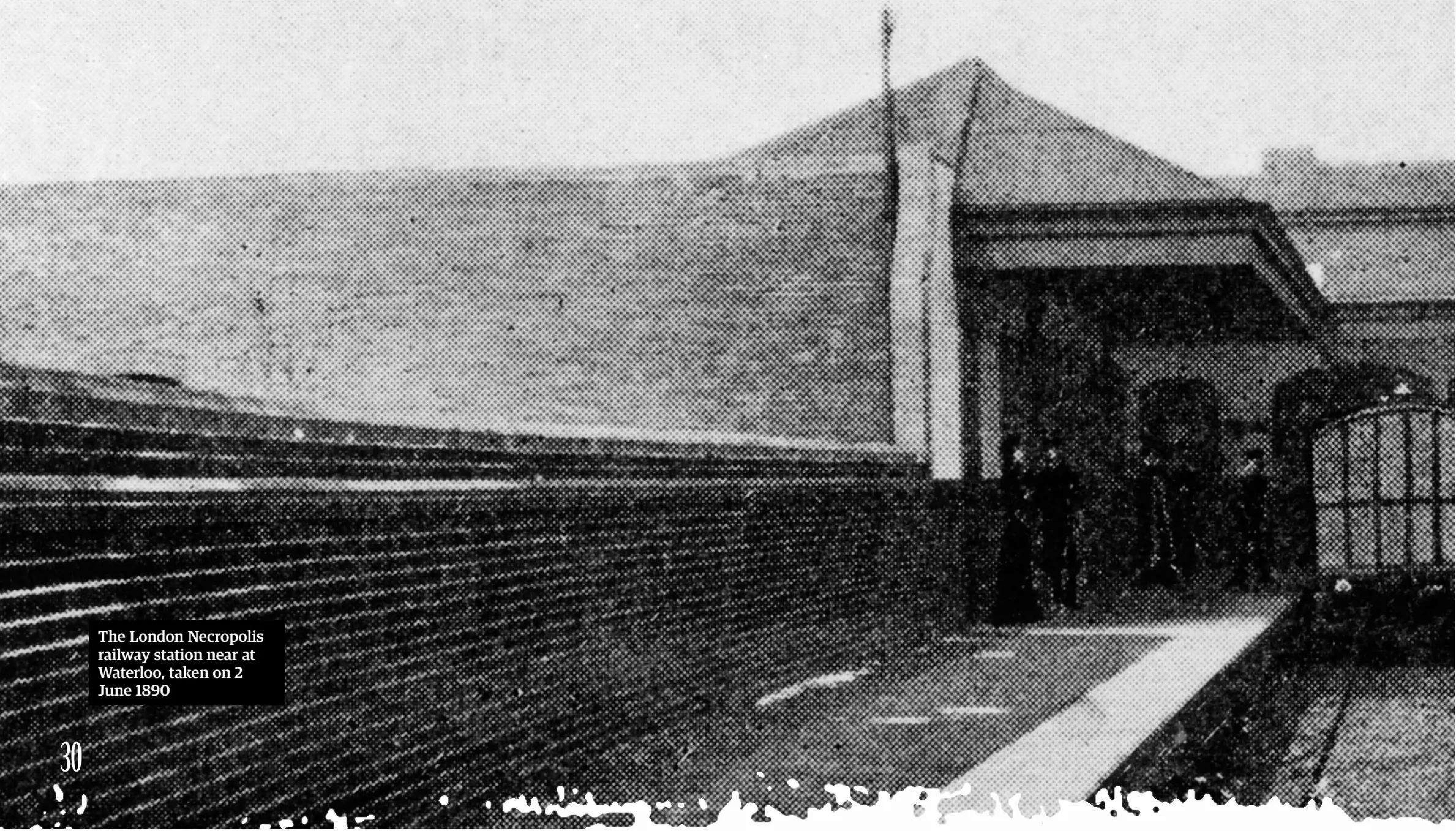
The pit at Charterhouse used an orderly, rather than haphazard, system of burials that prevented the spread of disease

ALL ABOARD THE NECROPOLIS RAILWAY

Grab your tickets for a ride on London's dedicated funeral service, from Waterloo to Surrey for £2 and 10s. Return tickets recommended...

The London Necropolis Railway was a service used solely to transport mourners and the dead between London Waterloo Station and Brookwood Cemetery. Opened in November 1854, the vast cemetery lay 37 kilometres (23 miles) to the southwest of London in Surrey, covering around 145 hectares (358 acres) on the old Woking Common. The railway gained its unusual name from Brookwood's nickname, the Necropolis, and was run by the London Necropolis Company, or LNC.

The authorities created Brookwood as a final resting place for London's dead, to ease overcrowding in the graveyards attached to London's churches. Many of the churchyards were so packed with the dead that gravediggers were unable to dig new graves without cutting through existing ones. The level of the ground rose considerably to accommodate all of the bodies, and fears of sickness caused by the corpses were rife.



The London Necropolis railway station near at Waterloo, taken on 2 June 1890

London had already established the so-called Magnificent Seven cemeteries surrounding the metropolis between 1833 and 1841. In 1851, Parliament passed 'An Act to Amend the Laws Concerning the Burial of the Dead in the Metropolis', founding the London Necropolis and National Mausoleum Company in 1852. It was hoped that Brookwood would act as the 'cemetery of all cemeteries' and end the burial overcrowding for good. The London Necropolis Railway was necessary to carry mourners and the dead to Brookwood, a journey which otherwise took up to 12 hours at a funeral cart pace.

The London Necropolis station stood beside Waterloo Station on Westminster Bridge Road. The system operated on a strict class system, with both the station waiting rooms and passenger carriages divided by class and religious affiliation, and coffin carriages likewise divided according to the class and religion of the dead. Mourners could buy return tickets, though unsurprisingly, only single tickets were available for the dead. Rumours abounded that those wanting to travel to Woking dressed up as mourners since the Necropolis Railway fares were cheaper than those on the main line service.

First-class funerals allowed mourners to choose the grave location and pay extra for a permanent monument. Second-class burials cost less, but limited the available grave locations, although they could also pay extra for a memorial. Third-class burials offered paupers' graves, including burials paid for by a parish. While we might baulk at such a system today, at least the poor got an individual grave at Brookwood, unlike the mass graves reserved for the poor elsewhere. Brookwood's first burial was a pair of stillborn twins in an unmarked grave.

Trains set off from the London Necropolis station, where they joined the South West Mainline towards Basingstoke. The trains left the main line at the junction west of Brookwood station and headed to the cemetery on its dedicated branch. The cemetery offered two stations: Anglican or Nonconformist. As an aside, architect Sydney Smirke designed the two stations – along with the British Museum's Reading Room!

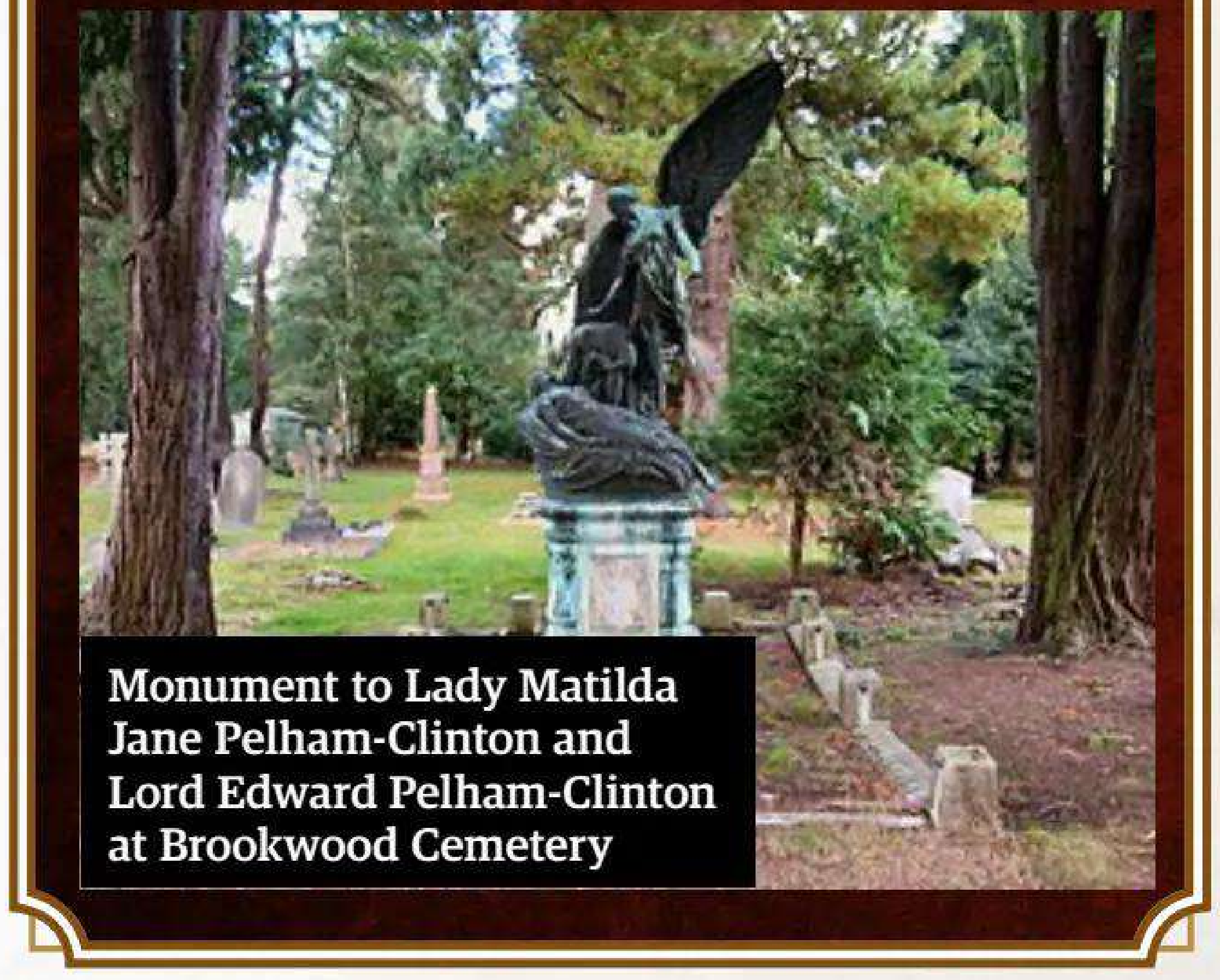
Unfortunately, the LNC didn't enjoy the success it hoped for. The original plan was for 10,000-50,000 burials a year, but by 1941, only an average of 2,300 burials had taken place at Brookwood every year. Competition from other cemeteries and the adoption of cars and hearses meant Londoners didn't want to travel that far to visit graves. An air raid in April 1941 badly damaged the London station, so the LNC moved services to Waterloo, although the London Necropolis Railway ended with the air raid.

The remains of the destroyed station became office space after 1945, while the company took up the tracks in Brookwood Cemetery. Both the Anglican and Nonconformist stations at Brookwood have since been demolished. All that remains is the building that housed the LNC offices on Westminster Bridge Road. Brookwood Cemetery is now a Grade I listed site, as well as the UK's biggest military cemetery, and you can still visit it using the nearby Brookwood station.

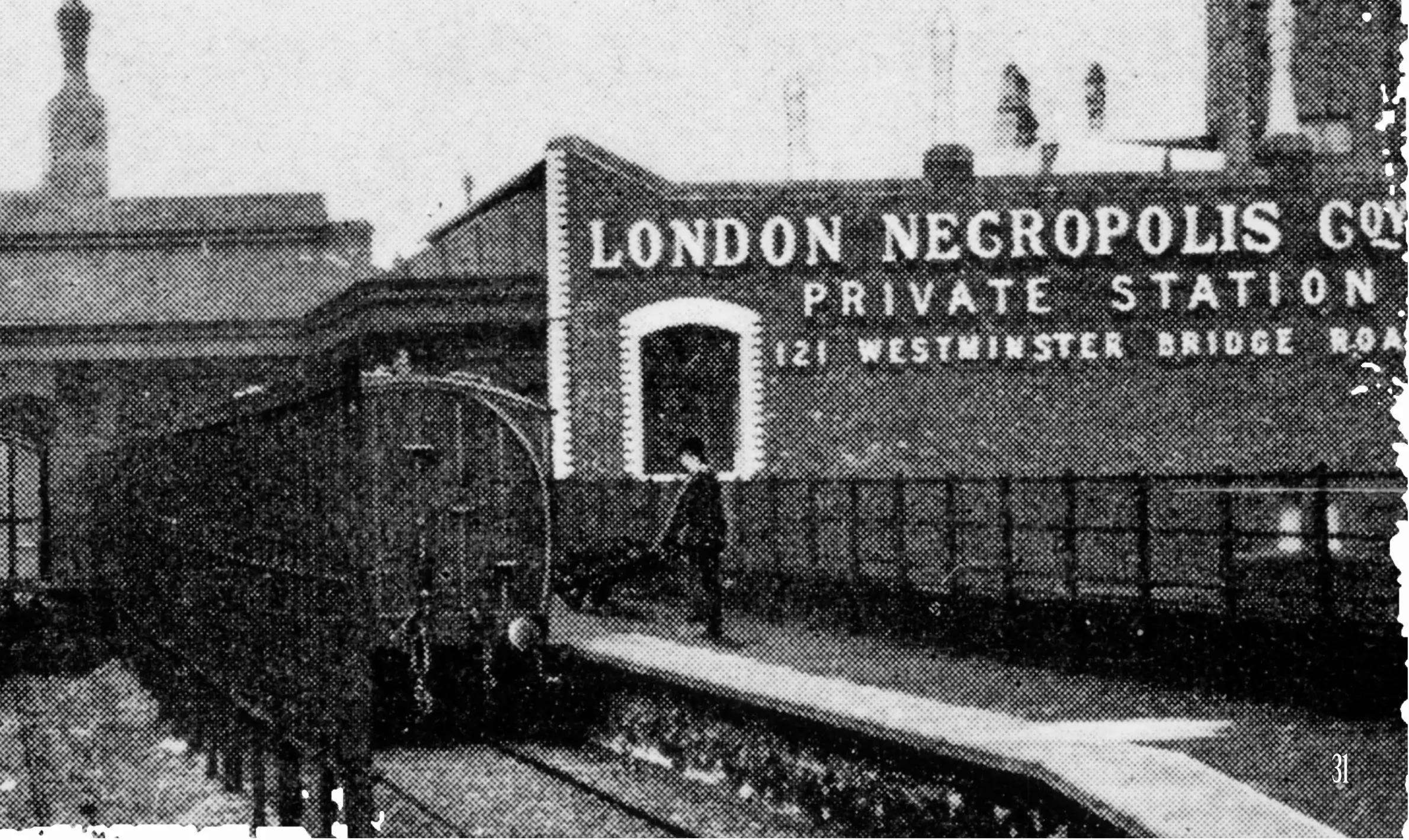
UK CEMETERY FIRSTS

Cemeteries can preserve social history and the environment among the gravestones

English Heritage registered Brookwood Cemetery as a historic environment in 1993. Not only does it preserve the grandeur of a Victorian garden cemetery, but it is also home to some of the first giant redwoods introduced in Britain. Cemetery authorities added the first burial area for Parsees in Britain in 1862, and the first burial area for Muslims in Britain in the 1880s.



Monument to Lady Matilda Jane Pelham-Clinton and Lord Edward Pelham-Clinton at Brookwood Cemetery



SOUNDS OF THE UNDERGROUND

The London Underground is the first underground railway. But what skulks in the depths beneath the capital city and what disasters have befallen this beloved network?

BAKER STREET
BAKER

The London Underground first opened on 10 January 1863, when the Metropolitan Railway connected Paddington and Farringdon Street, making the line the world's first underground railway. Over the following 163 years, new lines have been added, connecting further flung areas and linking the system to the overground rail network. Transport for London figures show up to 5 million journeys are made every day.

Yet as vital as the system is for reaching workplaces, homes, leisure spots, and schools, using the London Underground can also be a bewildering experience. Harry Beck's revolutionary map simplified the system in a design based on an electrical diagram, yet the 272 stations and 11 lines make journey-planning an overwhelming task.

It's also pretty bizarre to travel so far underground. The DLR concourse at Bank is 41.4 metres (136 feet) below street level, making it the deepest station in Central London. It's hard not to think about all of that clay, city infrastructure and steel between you and the sky. The horror films *Death Line* (1972) and *Creep* (2004) might make you wonder what else is down there with you!

Such depths were the legacy of the early workers who made the London Underground possible. In the 1860s, the Metropolitan Railway owners relied on hardworking navvies, mostly men from Cornwall, Ireland, or Scotland, to undertake the difficult and dangerous building work. With Health & Safety decades in the future, navvies used the cut-and-cover method, digging a trench along a

BAKER STREET
BAKER STREET
STREET

road, before laying the track, building the tunnel roof over the track, and re-laying the road on top. Injuries were common, and two men were killed when a steam engine's boiler exploded.

Construction evolved when tunnelling shields were introduced, allowing navvies to dig the tunnels by hand underground. This still meant working long hours in cold, wet and dark conditions. According to legend, they encountered plague pits along their routes, having to dig around them rather than cutting through them. One rumour suggests the Piccadilly line swerves to avoid a plague pit beside Green Park, though it's difficult to find hard evidence of its existence. Bank and Aldgate stations were apparently built over plague pits. Excavations revealed Liverpool Street station was built over the old Bedlam burial ground, while work on the Elizabeth Line at the station disturbed Black Death plague victims. We can't know how many builders encountered plague pits in total, but the idea of them disrupting construction passed into urban legend.

While people lost their lives building the Underground, some choose to enter the network and never leave. It's difficult to access recent data, but Transport for London confirmed 23 people died by suicide on the Tube in 2016/17. As we shall see, some of those traumatised souls apparently linger.

> "In the 1860s, the Metropolitan Railway owners relied on hardworking navvies"

Moorgate Tube Crash
CATASTROPHIC COLLISION

Many consider the crash at Moorgate to be the Tube's worst peacetime accident

The end of platform 9 at Moorgate station

At 8:46 am on 28 February 1975, a train pulling into Moorgate, the final station on the Northern City Line, failed to stop. It ploughed into the concrete wall at the end of the tunnel, causing the front three carriages to crush together. One carriage became lodged in the station ceiling. The accident killed 43 people and injured 74. Had the pupils from the City of London School for Girls, who normally used the service, been on the train, fatalities could have been higher. As it was, it took six days for the emergency services to rescue survivors and recover the dead, working in temperatures up to 33°C (91˚F).

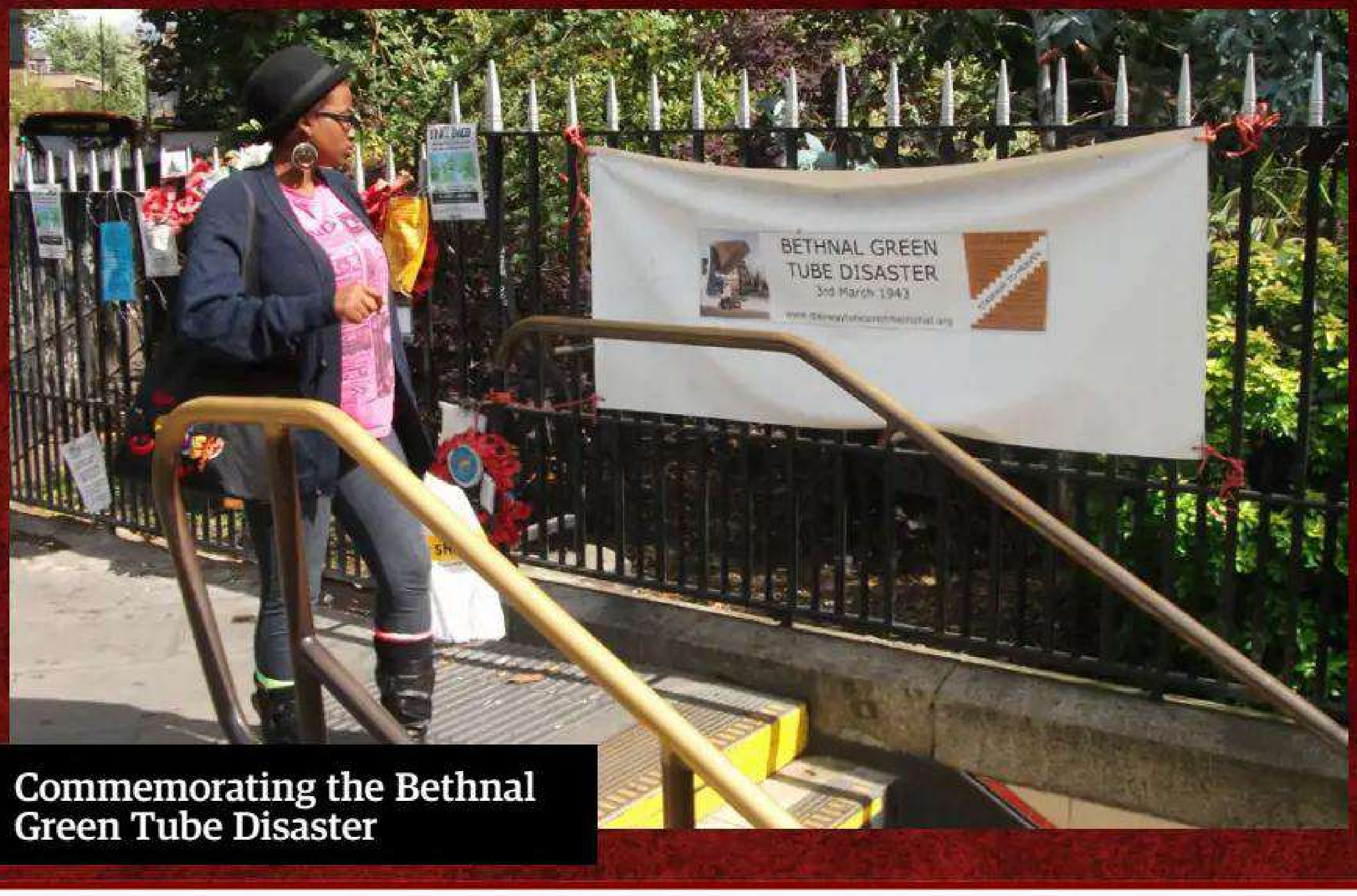
Investigations were carried out, although no one could pinpoint an exact cause for the catastrophe. The lack of mechanical faults in the train led the Department of the Environment to rule that the driver, 56-year-old Leslie Newson, caused the accident. It was decided that he didn't apply the brakes as the train entered the station, and there was no medical reason to explain his actions. Investigations revealed Newson had overshot the platform twice in the days before the accident, raising questions about whether his actions were intentional on that day.

New safety features, including speed controls, were introduced to prevent a repetition on the network. Services on the line ended in 1975, and British Rail took over the line in 1976.

> "Investigations revealed Newson had overshot the platform twice in the days before the accident"

Bethnal Green Disaster
HORRIFYING HUMAN AVALANCHE

The wartime disaster whose trauma still haunts the station



Commemorating the Bethnal Green Tube Disaster

Built in 1939, the unfinished Bethnal Green station on the Central Line became an air raid shelter during World War II, with volunteers setting up a canteen and even a library for those who came for shelter. Unfortunately, the place that was set up to protect the citizens of London also became the site of one of the worst civilian disasters of the war.

On 3 March 1943, the air raid siren sounded, and 1,500 people headed to the station. While some had already entered, others headed down the narrow stairs. A mother fell near the bottom, triggering others to fall around her, while those behind them continued to press forward, carried by the momentum of the crowd. Around 300 people were caught up in the crush, which killed 173 people: 27 men, 84 women, and 62 children. An air raid warden reported a stampede on the stairs, while other authorities disagreed, citing a lack of evidence of panic. News of the disaster was suppressed until 1945 to avoid damaging morale.

There are reports that suggest this awful trauma still causes after-echoes in the station. In 1981, a worker was preparing to close the station for the night after the trains stopped running. While finishing his paperwork, he heard children sobbing. Thinking he must be over-tired, he kept working, but the sound grew louder. Next, he heard female screams, followed by the sounds of a panicked crowd.

The disembodied sounds lasted for almost 15 minutes, by which point the member of staff could no longer handle the noise and bolted from his office. Other staff members have reported hearing similar sounds at night.

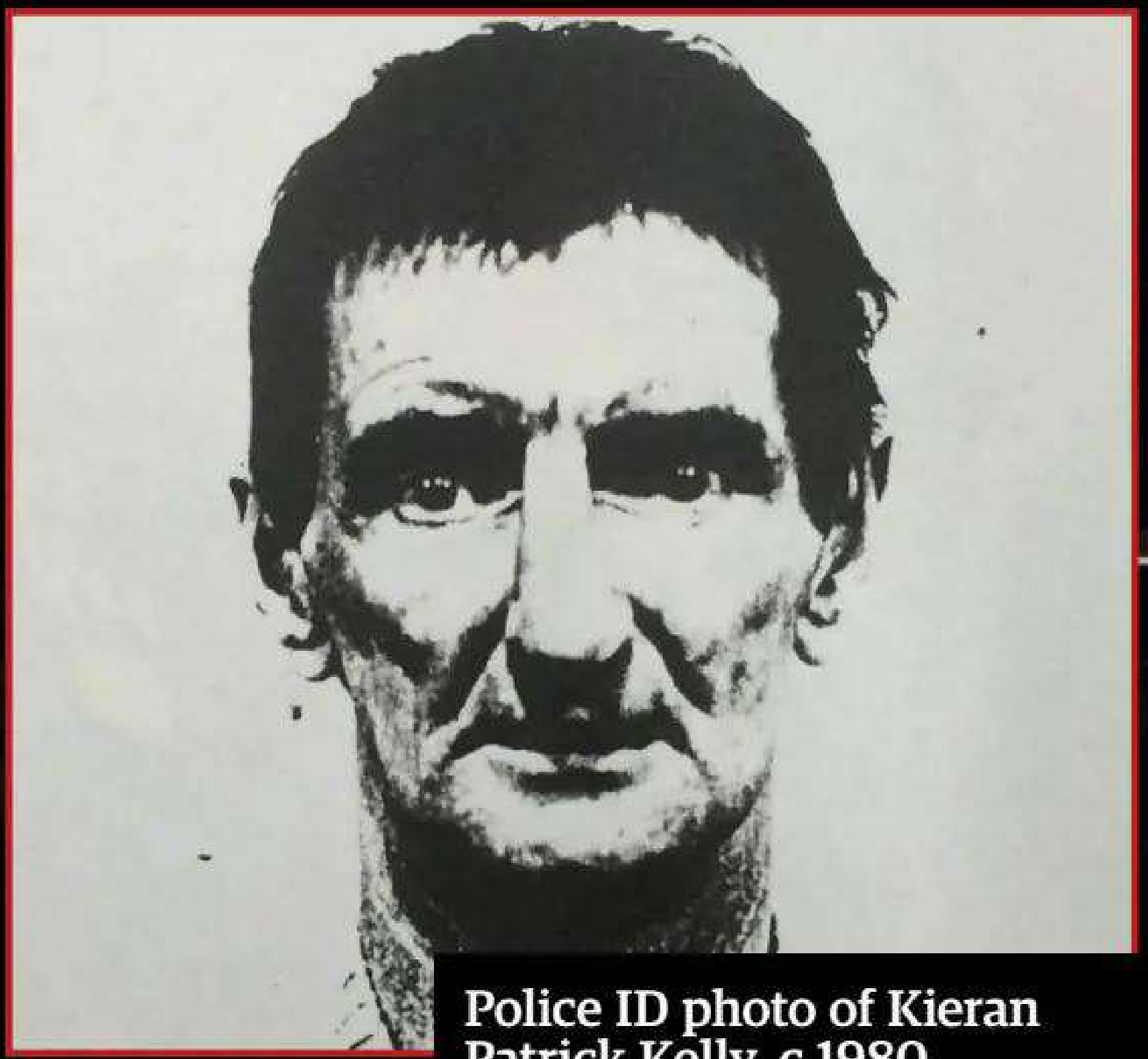
Kieran Kelly
THE LONDON UNDERGROUND KILLER

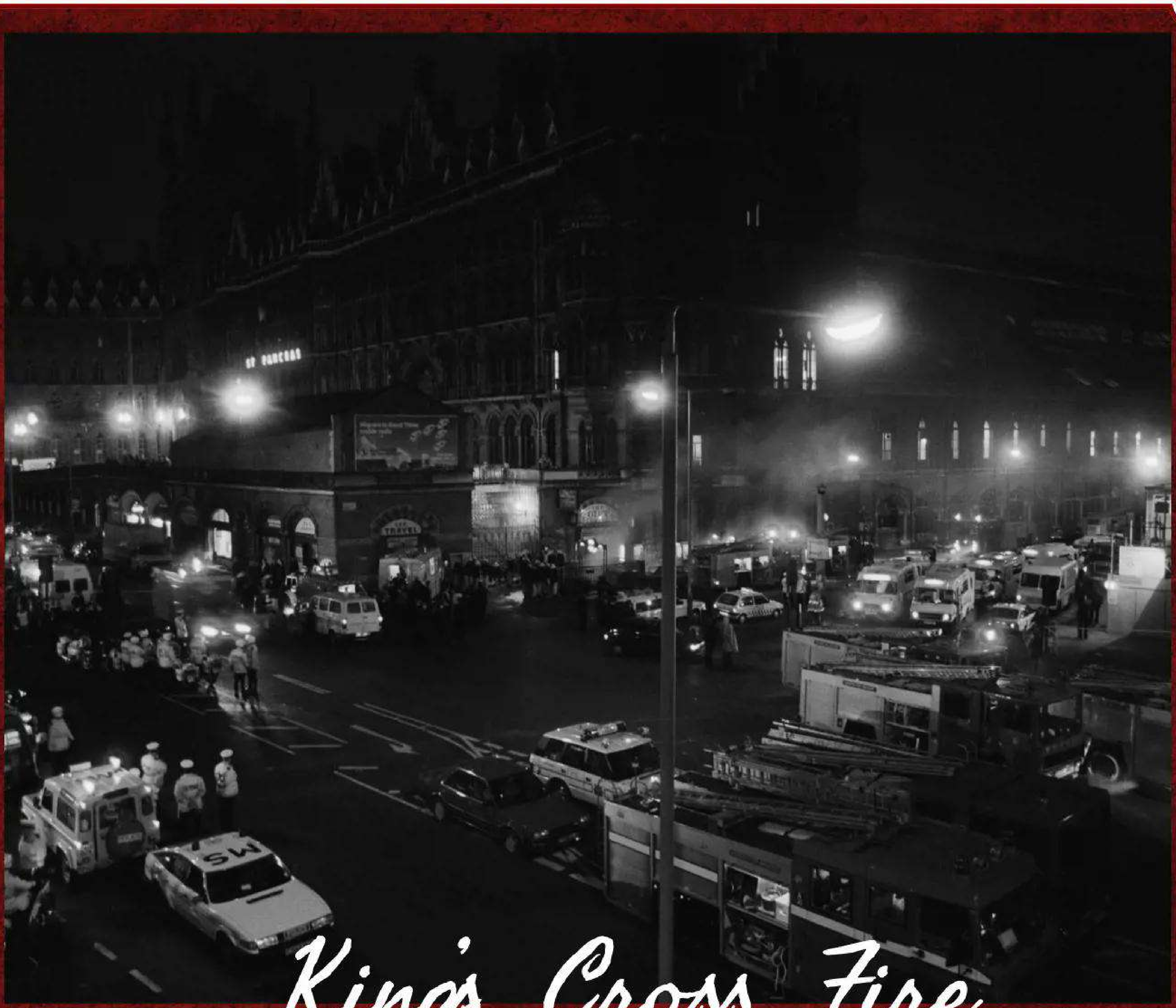
Was Kieran Patrick Kelly really a prolific serial killer on the Tube?

Born in 1930 in Rathdowney, County Laois, Kieran Kelly settled in London in 1960 after a period in the British Army, though he later ended up homeless. In 1983, he was arrested for petty theft, where he strangled a fellow homeless man to death in the police station holding cell. When questioned, Kelly then revealed a story of murder and attempted murder across London.

According to Kelly, his killing spree began in 1953 when he pushed a fellow Irishman in front of a train at Baker Street station. He claimed he killed two more people the same way on the Northern Line, at Balham and Kennington. He also confessed to using poison, setting people on fire, and stabbing victims, with his victims numbering around 12 or 13. While his methods apparently varied, his victims were always fellow homeless people. The details sometimes matched unsolved crimes, yet in 1984, he was only convicted of the murder of the homeless man in 1983. He died in prison in 2001, although police never managed to link the alleged Baker Street Tube killing with a death on the line.

Kelly gained a new notoriety in 2015 when former police detective Geoff Platt published a book called the *London Underground Serial Killer.* Platt claimed Kelly murdered 31 people, inflating the murder toll with deaths categorised as suicides, and that the Home Office covered up the crimes to avoid a panic about using the Northern Line. Irish journalist Robert Mulhearn questioned these claims in 2019, suggesting Kelly killed around six people – far fewer than he claimed. No one knows if he did murder as many people as he stated, or if his confessions were fantasies. Irish broadcaster RTÉ released a podcast about Kelly called *The Nobody Zone* in 2020 to explore his story.


Police ID photo of Kieran Patrick Kelly, c 1980



King's Cross Fire
CASUALTIES AT KING'S CROSS

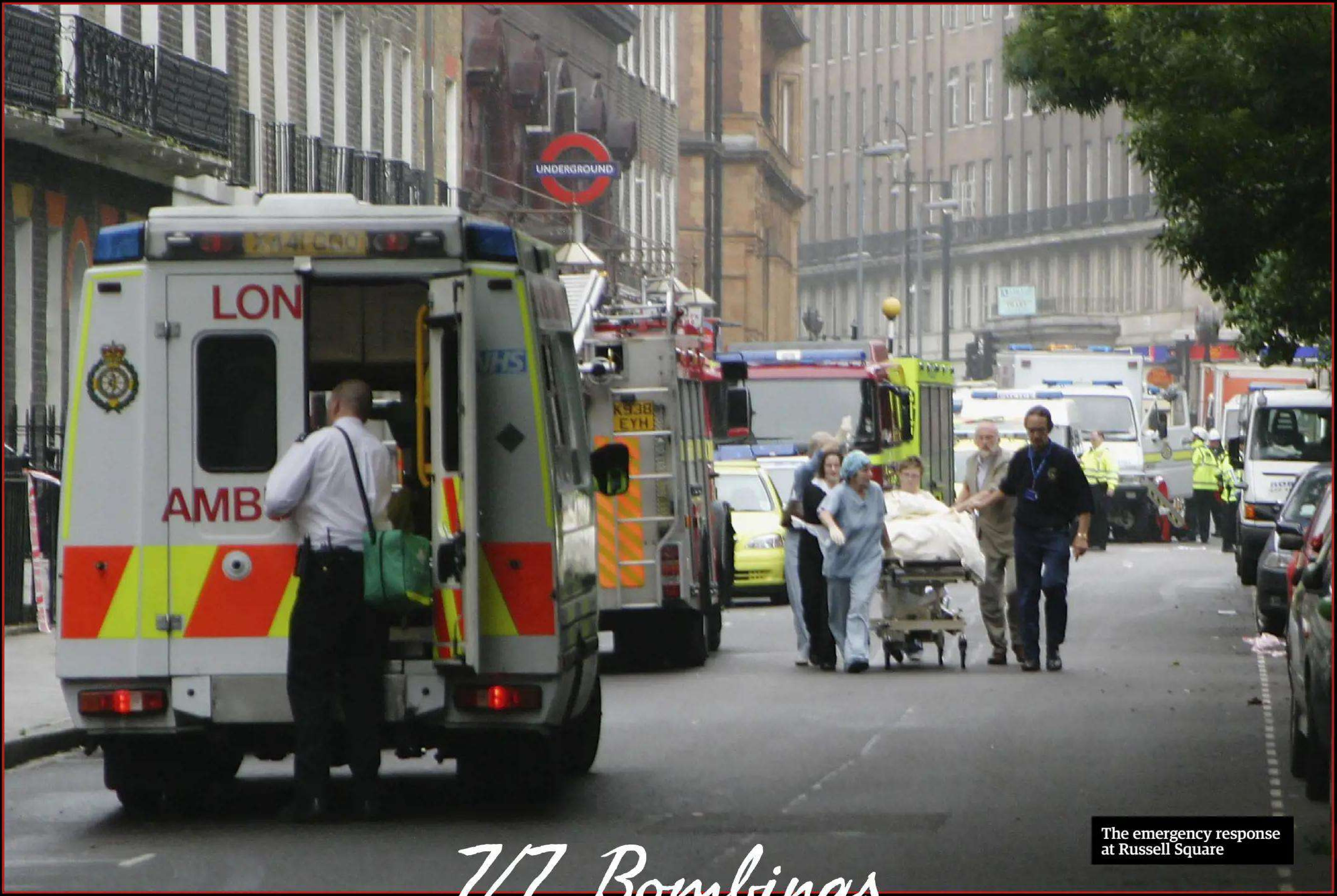
The deadly fire led to major changes across the London Underground

On the evening of 18 November 1987, a passenger dropped a match on the wooden escalators leading to and from the Piccadilly Line at King's Cross station. It fell through the gap between the steps and set fire to the rubbish piled beneath. Station staff called the London Fire Brigade, but it was impossible to reach the small, cardboard box-sized fire beneath the escalator.

While they planned how to tackle the blaze, the heat of the flames caused the wooden escalator to combust, which created superheated gas inside the escalator shaft. Trapped against the ceiling, the gas ignited layers of old paint, releasing deadly cyanide gas. Trains weren't stopping at the station, and passengers used the Victoria Line escalator to escape, but the ticket hall was still busy. A fireball erupted from the escalator shaft into the packed ticket hall, with the fire hot enough to strip tiles, crack concrete, and melt plastic. The clock stopped at 7:45 pm, and the fire was only brought under control by 9:48 pm.

The fire killed 31 people, including a firefighter who stopped to help a burned woman, and injured many more. As a result, wooden escalators were replaced across the network, smoking was banned in all station areas, London Underground staff received new training to evacuate stations, and the London Fire Brigade adopted radio equipment compatible with that used by British Transport Police. The stopped clock remains as a memorial to the dead.

> "The fire killed 31 people, including a firefighter who stopped to help a burned woman, and injured many more"


The emergency response at Russell Square

7/7 Bombings TERROR ATTACK

Fifty-two people died in the UK's deadliest 21st-century terror attack

On 6 July 2005, London was in celebration mode over the news that the city would host the 2012 Olympics. The following day, however, jubilation quickly turned to horror as around 8:50am, three bombs exploded on the London Underground in the tunnels near Aldgate, Edgware Road and Russell Square stations. A fourth device detonated on the number 30 bus at 9:47am near the British Medical Association headquarters in Tavistock Square. Fifty-two people were killed in the attack, while over 770 people were injured. The 7 July bombings became the UK's deadliest terrorist attack since the Lockerbie bombing in 1988.

Suicide bombers Mohammad Sidique Khan, Shehzad Tanweer, Hasib Hussain, and Germaine Lindsay carried the explosives onto the Underground and bus system in rucksacks. Each train had set off from King's Cross; the Edgware Road and Aldgate trains were on the Circle Line, while the Russell Square train was on the Piccadilly Line.

The Russell Square explosion was more devastating due to the confined space of the Piccadilly Line's deep-level tunnel, compared to the wider cut-and-cover tunnels of the Circle Line. The tight space meant that the blast force was reflected in the tunnel, causing it to become concentrated. Twenty-six were killed at King's Cross/Russell Square, while six were killed at Edgware Road and seven were killed at Aldgate.

Survivors who gave evidence at the inquest described staying to help fellow injured passengers, demonstrating the strength and bravery of ordinary people in the face of adversity.

Disappearances and Murders

CRIME ON THE UNDERGROUND

The Underground has been the site of various disappearances and murders in its 163-year history

Tashan Daniel

AN ATHLETIC CAREER CUT SHORT

Alex Lanning and Jonathan Camille stabbed aspiring athlete Tashan Daniel at Hillingdon station on 24 September 2019. Daniel was going to see an Arsenal match with a friend at the time. Lanning and Camille approached Daniel, starting a fight on the platform, before Lanning stabbed Daniel as the train pulled into the station.

The knife used was designed for NATO military aircraft rescues, although Lanning claimed it was a film prop from *F9* in the Fast & Furious franchise. The pair fled into a neighbouring housing estate and were on the run for ten days. Lanning was convicted of murder, while Camiele was convicted of manslaughter. Hillingdon Council launched a bursary award for young people as a memorial to Daniel.

Countess Teresa Łubieńska

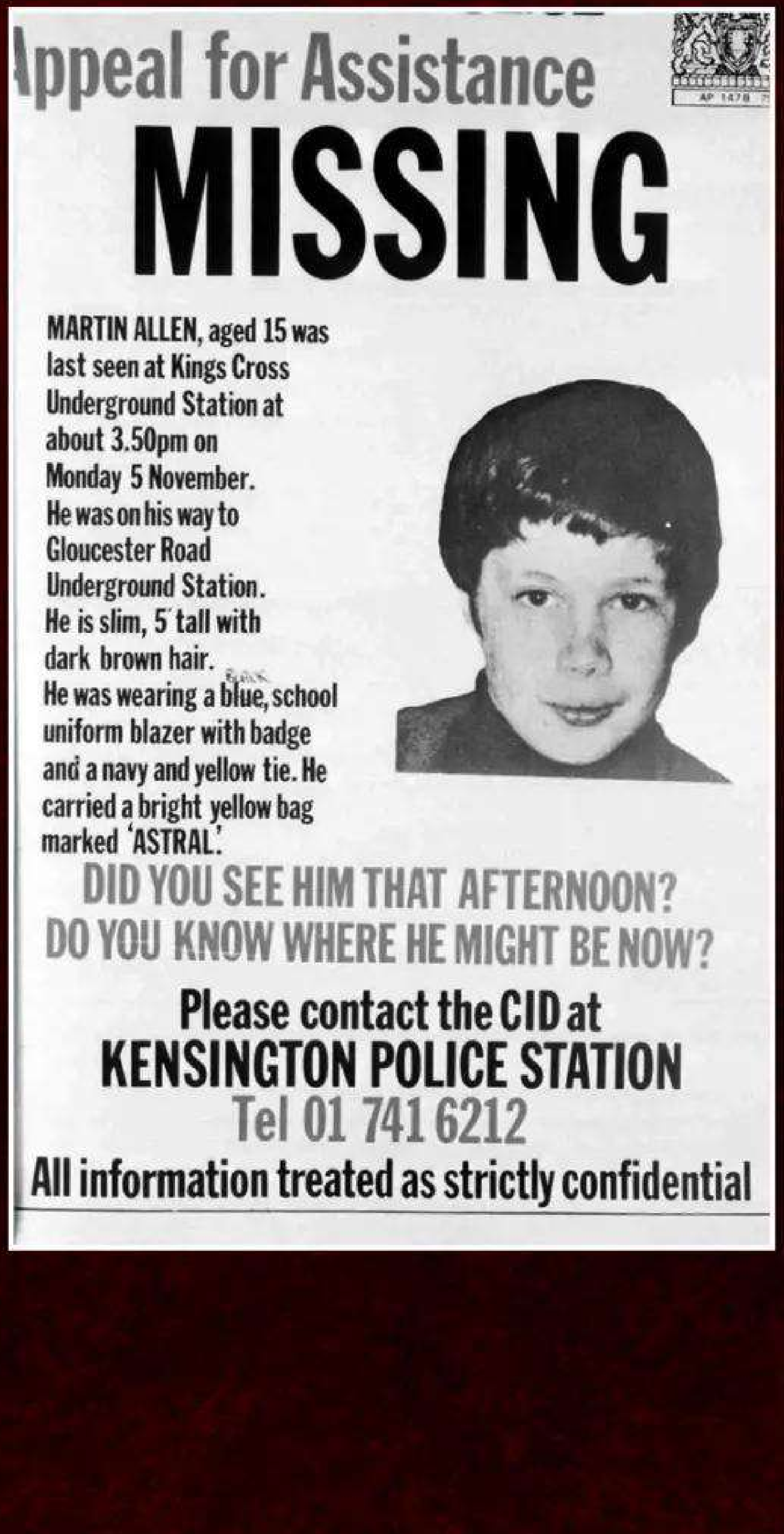
THE MURDERED COUNTESS

Polish countess, Teresa Łubieńska, was stabbed on the platform at Gloucester Road station on 24 May 1957. The subsequent police investigation into her murder revealed that she had been part of the resistance against the Nazis in Poland, but spent two years in Auschwitz for sheltering escaped prisoners. She fled to London when she was released and it was there she set up the Police Association of Ex-political Prisoners in German Concentration Camps.

No one ever found the exact location of the stabbing, and no knife was ever found, although the small size of the blade made assassination an unlikely cause. While police interviewed 18,000 people in connection with the case, the murderer's identity remains unknown to this day.

Martin Allen

THE ABDUCTED TEENAGER



ppeal for Assistance

AP 1478

MISSING

MARTIN ALLEN, aged 15 was last seen at Kings Cross Underground Station at about 3.50pm on Monday 5 November. He was on his way to Gloucester Road Underground Station. He is slim, 5′ tall with dark brown hair. He was wearing a blue, school uniform blazer with badge and a navy and yellow tie. He carried a bright yellow bag marked 'ASTRAL.'

DID YOU SEE HIM THAT AFTERNOON?
DO YOU KNOW WHERE HE MIGHT BE NOW?

Please contact the CID at
KENSINGTON POLICE STATION
Tel 01 741 6212
All information treated as strictly confidential

Martin Allen disappeared on the London Underground on the afternoon of 5 November 1979. His last confirmed appearance was at King's Cross Tube station, where a schoolfriend parted company with him. His schoolfriend insisted Allen had been alone when they went their separate ways, although eyewitnesses claimed to see him with a man at Gloucester Road Tube station, heading for Earl's Court. The overbearing and intimidating behaviour of the man led many to suspect Allen had been abducted.

The police investigation and widespread media coverage failed to find the 15-year-old boy, and sporadic efforts to reopen the case over the years still have found nothing. No one knows what became of Martin Allen, and his disappearance remains a cold case.

© Alamy, Getty Images, Wiki

Hauntings and Folklore

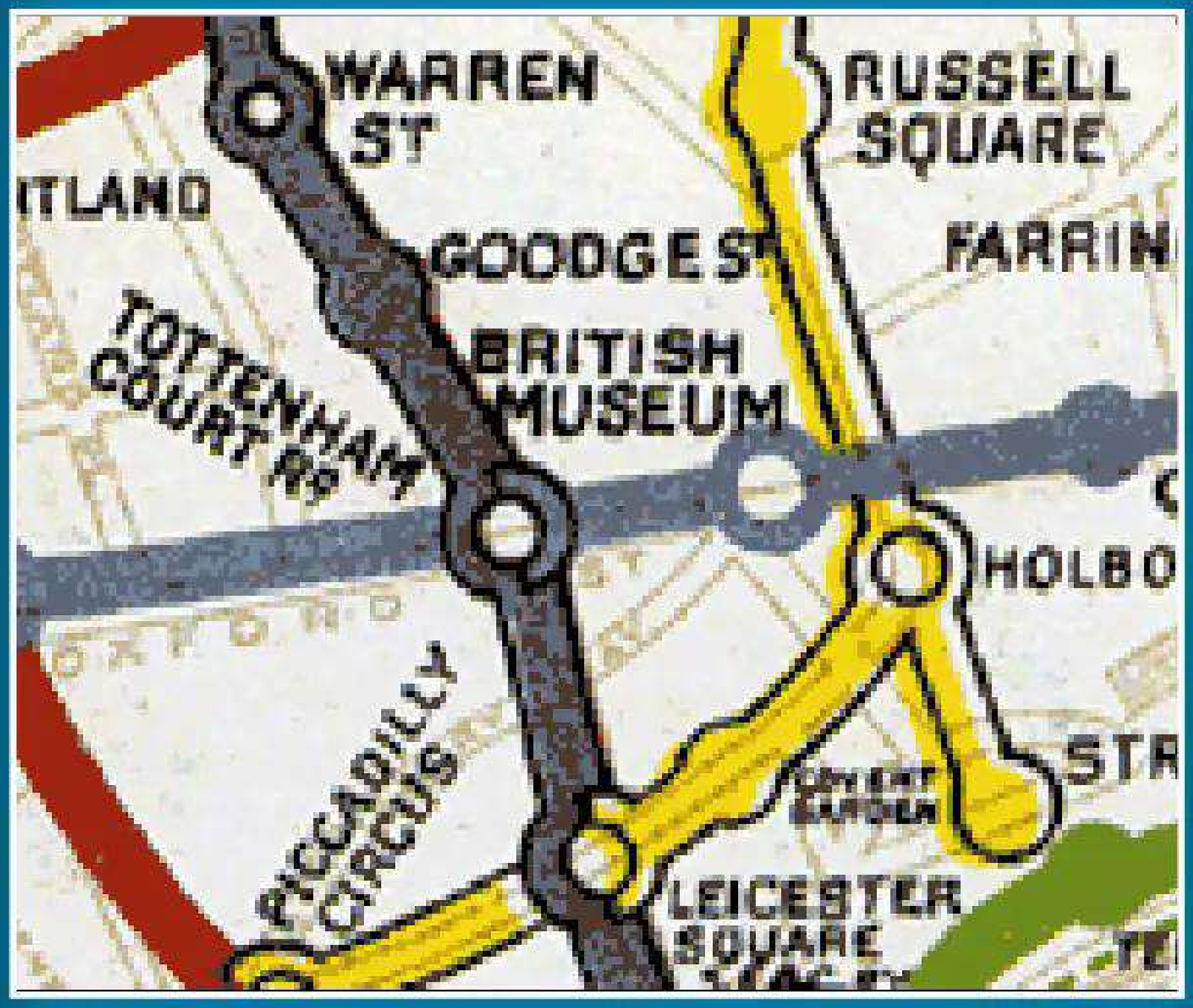
MIND THE GAP

Ghosts are almost inevitable on a 163-year-old transport system in a 2,000-year-old city

THE ACTOR APPARITION

Actor William Terriss was a smash hit in the West End, but in 1897, a fellow actor, Richard Archer Prince, stabbed him at the Adelphi Theatre stage door. According to legend, he haunts Covent Garden Tube station, built after Terriss's death. Witnesses have identified his ghost based on photographs of Terriss, and he is described as a statuesque Victorian gentleman wearing a grey suit and white gloves. Sightings were bizarrely common in 1955, with the stories brought to public attention in January 1956, though sightings have dwindled over the years. The most recent was reported in 2008.

The old British Museum station stood between Tottenham Court Road and Holborn on the Central Line. Legend has it that the ghost of an Egyptian princess haunted the station, reaching the platforms using a secret tunnel from the Egyptian Room where her mummy rested. She supposedly screamed in the tunnels, with people able to hear her in the nearby stations. One rumour insisted that two women disappeared from Holborn station in 1935, and marks were found on the walls of the British Museum station soon afterwards, though evidence is non-existent.



LIVERPOOL STREET

THE GHOST IN WHITE OVERALLS

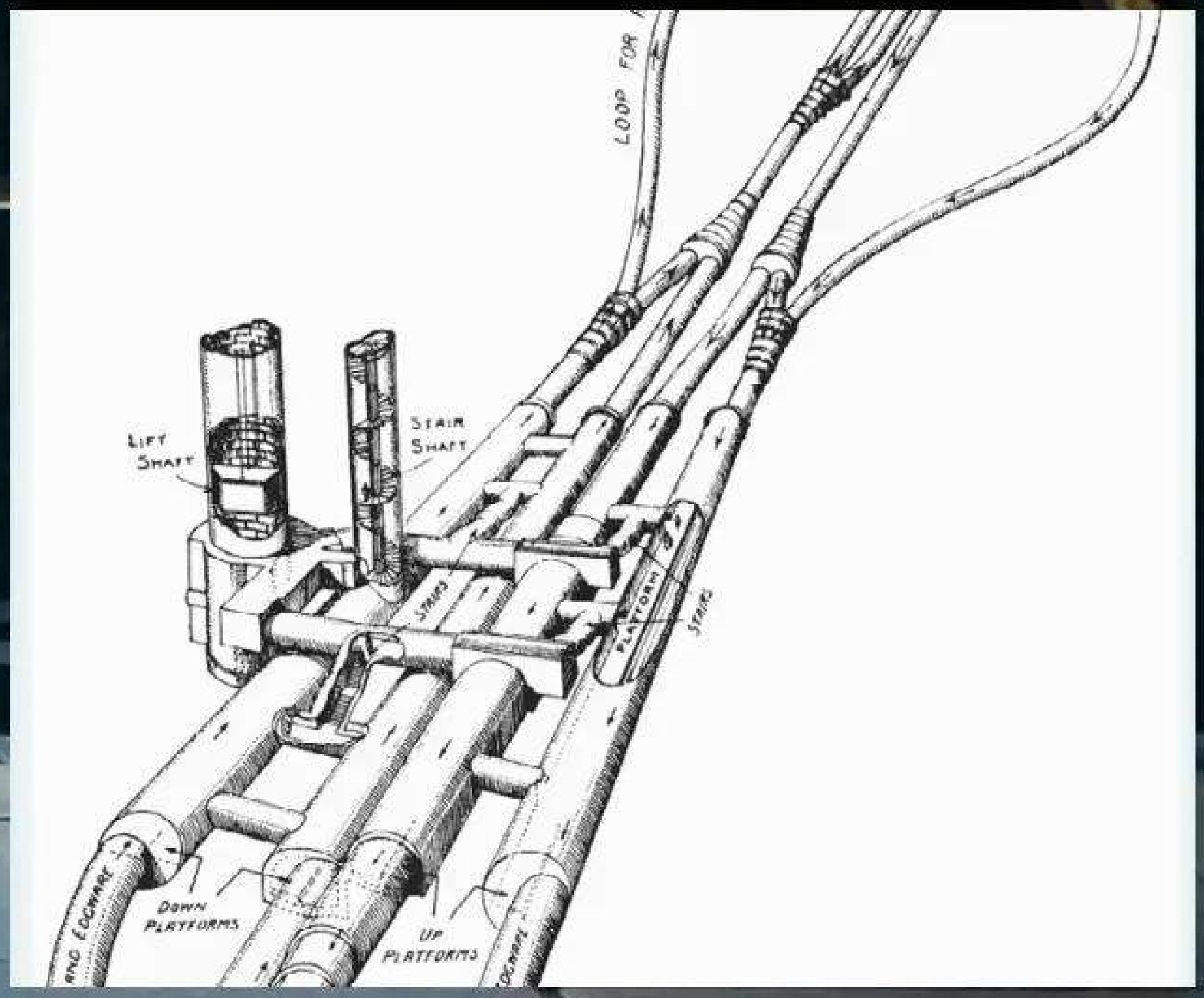
Liverpool Street station has a particularly weird spectre. Staff have reported seeing a man in white overalls waiting on the eastbound Central Line platform after trains have stopped for the evening. He disappears if anyone tries to approach him. What's worse is that anyone on the platform seem unable to see him, but he can be seen on the security cameras. He doesn't seem to actually do anything, but he'll certainly be waiting a while for a train. It might be tempting to link him to the nearby burial grounds, but his overalls suggest he's a more recent phantom.

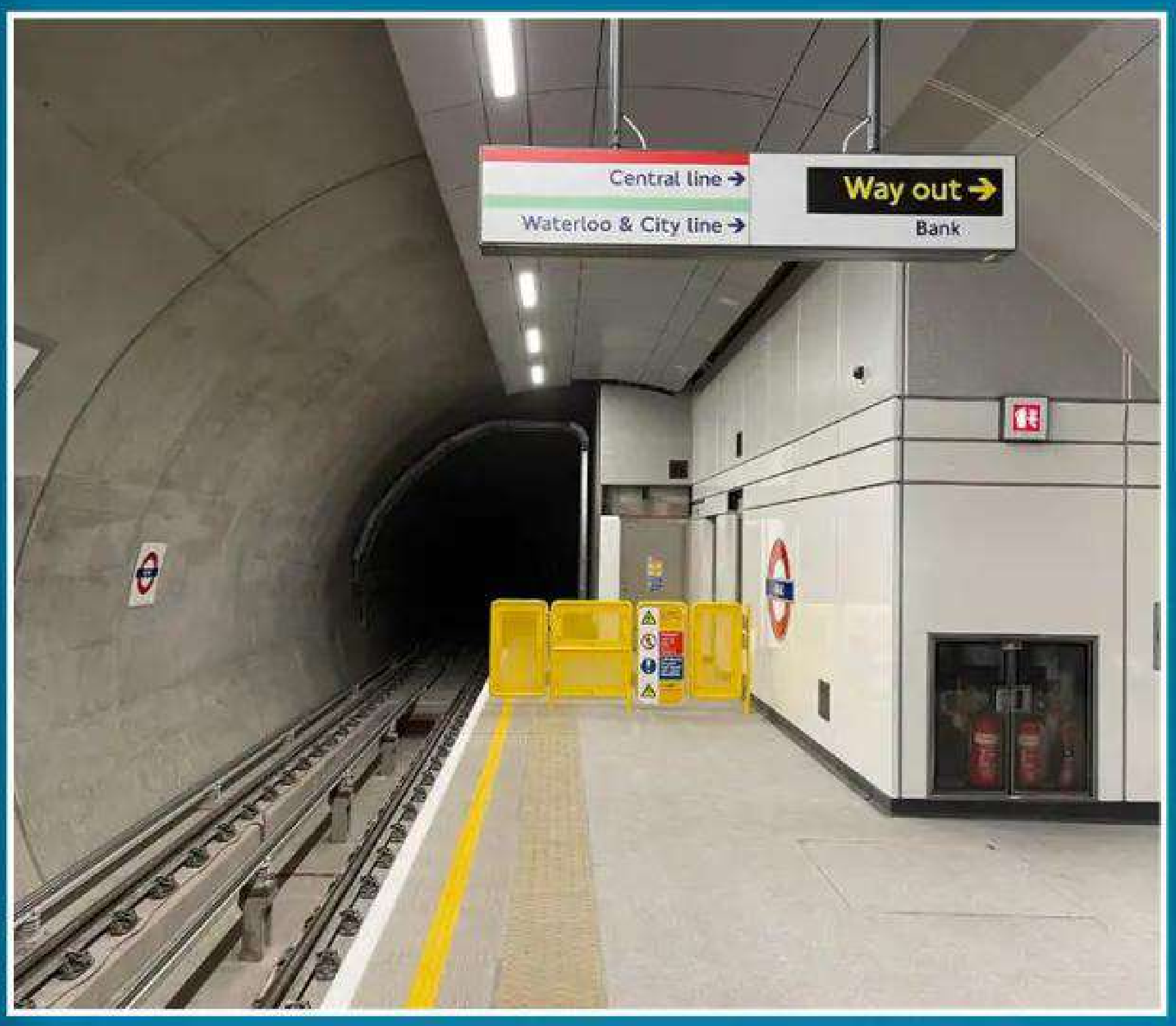
EDWARD TOPLIS
METROPOLITAN
DISTRICT RAILWAY
METROPOLITAN RAILWAY

Aldgate station, opened in 1876, allegedly stands on a plague pit. Soon after the station opened, staff began hearing footsteps in the tunnels that would then stop abruptly. Yet no one suspects a malevolent presence, and some wonder if the footsteps belong to a protective spirit. An electrician almost died after he fell onto a live rail; he survived, despite having 20,000 volts run through him. Staff nearby saw an 'elderly angel', described as a "luminous figure of an old lady" kneeling beside the man, stroking his hair. Is she linked to the plague pit, or a benevolent spectre?

THE KENNINGTON LOOP HAUNTING

The Kennington Loop enables southbound drivers on the Northern Line to take their train back up the line after Kennington. In the 1980s, a driver and guard stopped in the Loop at a red light. They heard someone opening and closing the doors connecting the carriages and went to check that a passenger hadn't stayed on the train. It was empty. Colleagues confirmed it had happened before. The driver and guard narrowed the start of the activity to a tragic death when a man tried to pass between carriages while the train was moving, but fell onto the tracks.





THE BLACK NUN

The Black Nun of Threadneedle Street is believed to be the sister of a Bank of England cashier hanged for forgery. She wanders Threadneedle Street, dressed in black and asking if anyone has seen her brother. She also appears in Bank station. One worker believed he'd spotted an old lady in the station in the early hours of the morning. He tried to catch up with her, only for her to disappear down a corridor with no exit. Workers report knocking inside empty lifts after the station closes, and people report strange smells but, let's face it, it's the Underground.

THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON

In a city pushed to breaking point, the smouldering coals from a bakehouse devastated the heart of England

Deep in the early hours of Sunday 2 September 1666, the plague-stricken and drought-ridden City of London was changed forever. In an unassuming and unremarkable bakehouse on Pudding Lane, as the baker and his family slumbered, a fire started that would blaze for days.

Within minutes, the flames had built into a nightmarish inferno and the stage was set for one of the most important events in the life of Restoration England. The Medieval lanes and alleyways that made a labyrinth of the City of London filled with fire, timber and thatch - feeding the flames that lit up the sky for three long, devastating nights. The Great Fire of London wreaked havoc, seemingly unstoppable, until it was finally brought under control on Wednesday 5 September.

When the flames died to embers and the smoke cleared, the City of London was left in ruins. Although official casualties were surprisingly few, there was no such mercy for the buildings squeezed into the tightly packed streets. Crowded wooden tenements were reduced to ash and tens of thousands were made homeless and left with nothing to their name.

In the aftermath of the fire, scapegoats were sought and found, and an innocent man went to the gallows. For those who followed a different faith or came from overseas, this was a time of suspicion and distrust. So dark did things become that the king himself dispatched troops not only to fight the fire, but to save those who had, for one reason or another, attracted the attention of the mobs who crowded the streets, calling for justice.

As days turned into weeks and weeks into months, the process of rebuilding London became the primary focus of Crown and parliament. From the rudest tenement to the great Cathedral of Saint Paul's, the buildings that had been swallowed by fire were painstakingly replaced with new structures. It was a time of change, with famed names like Sir Christopher Wren reshaping and building the foundations of the city that we know today.

LONDON IN THE 1660s

Crowded and disease-ridden, London was bursting at the seams. It was a city waiting to explode

At the dawn of 1666, London was the largest city in Great Britain. More than 500,000 people were packed cheek by jowl into its sprawling buildings, the city expanding far beyond its original confines until the slums spilled out of the city walls. London had been a centre of commerce, trade and civilisation for centuries and it was growing at an unprecedented rate. People from all over the world came to live in the city, creating a cosmopolitan, and sometimes confrontational, melting pot.

Home to about 80,000 people, the vast majority lost not only their accommodation to the inferno, but virtually everything they owned. Packed tightly into the unyielding city walls and with the mighty River Thames forming a natural boundary to the south, the Medieval founders of the City of London had not envisioned such a vast number of inhabitants when they laid out the city.

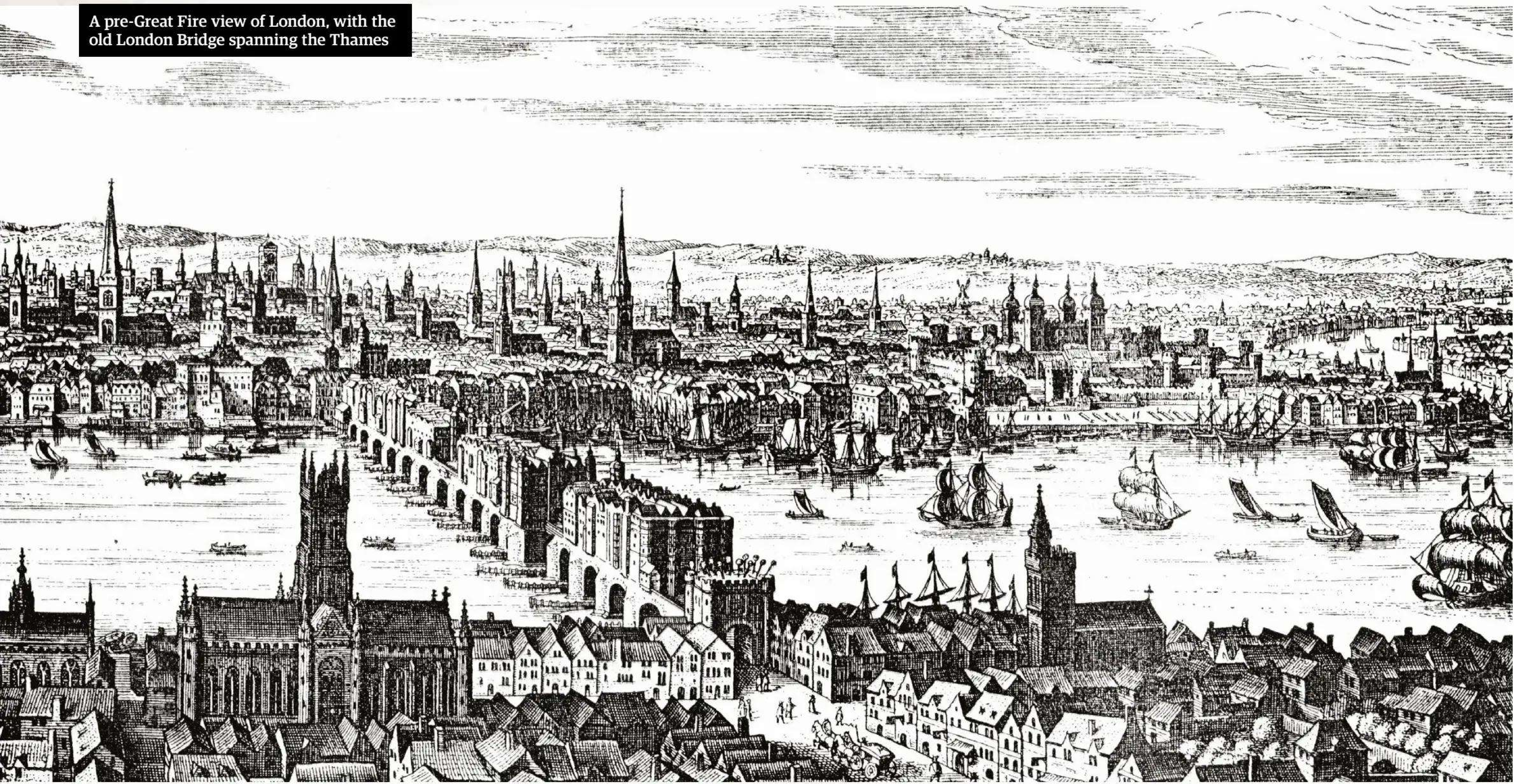
London was a maze of twisting, narrow alleyways that rarely saw the sun, its residents deprived of fresh air or basic sanitation. As the centuries passed, it had grown and developed, unplanned and virtually unregulated despite efforts to increase restrictions on what could be built and where. Instead, buildings were seemingly dropped down anywhere, no sooner finished than they were already filling with residents desperate for a roof over their heads.

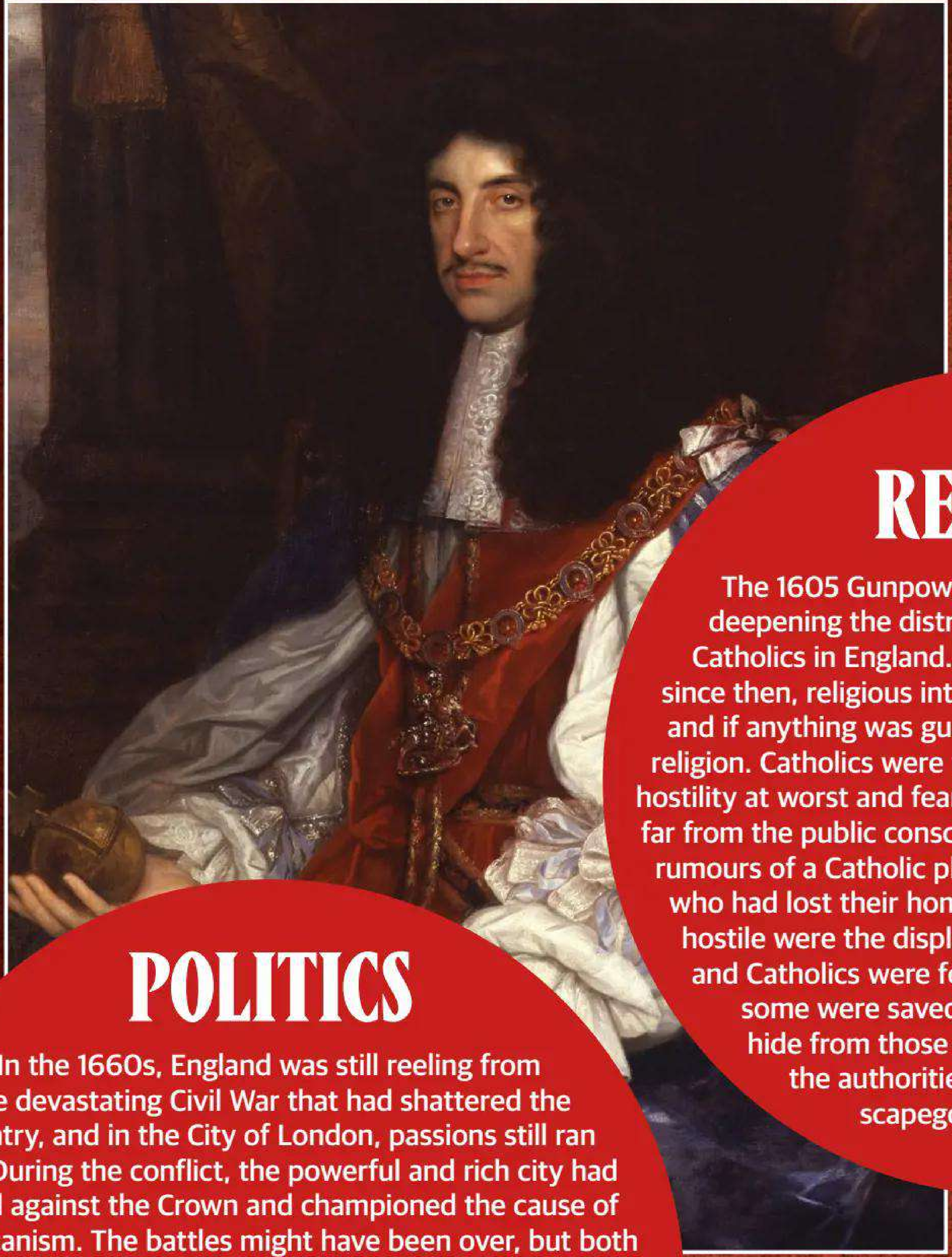
This forest of tottering wooden tenements with dry thatched roofs provided fertile kindling for the hungry fire. Although combustible materials were supposedly prohibited, stone was expensive, while wood and thatch was cheap, so builders took a risk, regardless of regulation. As the overcrowding grew worse, those who could afford to began to move out of the centre of the city. Estates were set out, the large stone houses of the wealthy surrounded by open ground, but for those who could not afford to escape, the future was bleak.

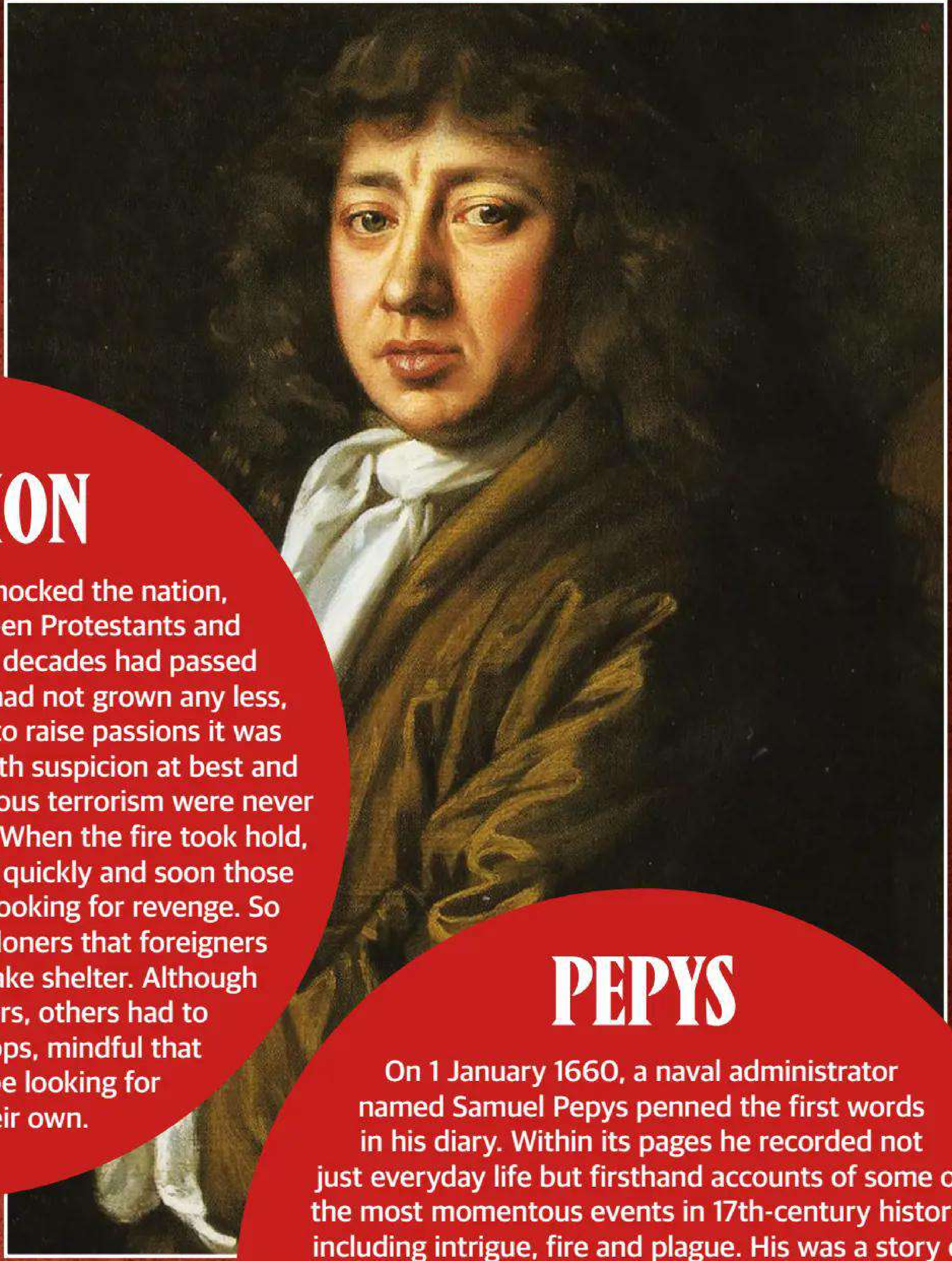
Suburbs and slums sprang up and the vast majority of the population settled in these ill-maintained buildings. With so many people living in squalid conditions, the conditions were rife for catastrophe and the plague took a devastating hold of the City of London in 1665. The rich had no desire to be in the centre of this crowded, stinking swarm, and even though they maintained their spacious, fine city residences built of strong stone, they often left the seething streets of the capital behind. For those with money, there was another world far beyond the slums.

Here, in the fresh rural air, the wealthy settled in their country retreats when the working week was done, while King Charles II made his court in Westminster. In fact, his palace came perilously close to being devoured by the flames that consumed so much of London. In fact, the king's initial efforts to help extinguish the flames were rebuffed, while personal and political prejudices contributed to the spread of the inferno and the scale of the damage that was wrought.

> "This forest of tottering wooden tenements with dry thatched roofs provided fertile kindling for the hungry fire"


A pre-Great Fire view of London, with the old London Bridge spanning the Thames





RELIGION

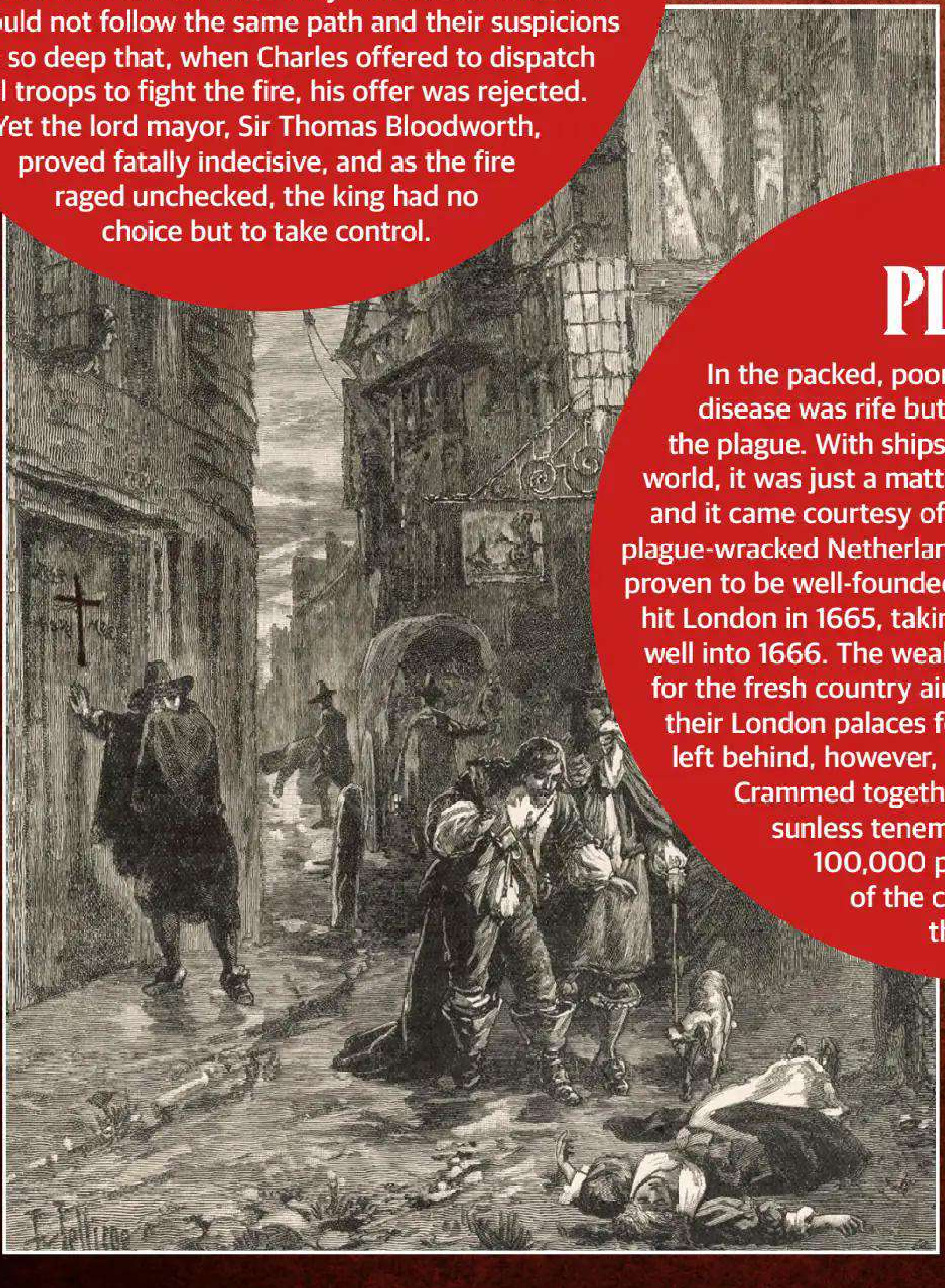
The 1605 Gunpowder Plot shocked the nation, deepening the distrust between Protestants and Catholics in England. Although decades had passed since then, religious intolerance had not grown any less, and if anything was guaranteed to raise passions it was religion. Catholics were viewed with suspicion at best and hostility at worst and fears of religious terrorism were never far from the public consciousness. When the fire took hold, rumours of a Catholic plot spread quickly and soon those who had lost their homes were looking for revenge. So hostile were the displaced Londoners that foreigners and Catholics were forced to take shelter. Although some were saved by soldiers, others had to hide from those same troops, mindful that the authorities would be looking for scapegoats of their own.

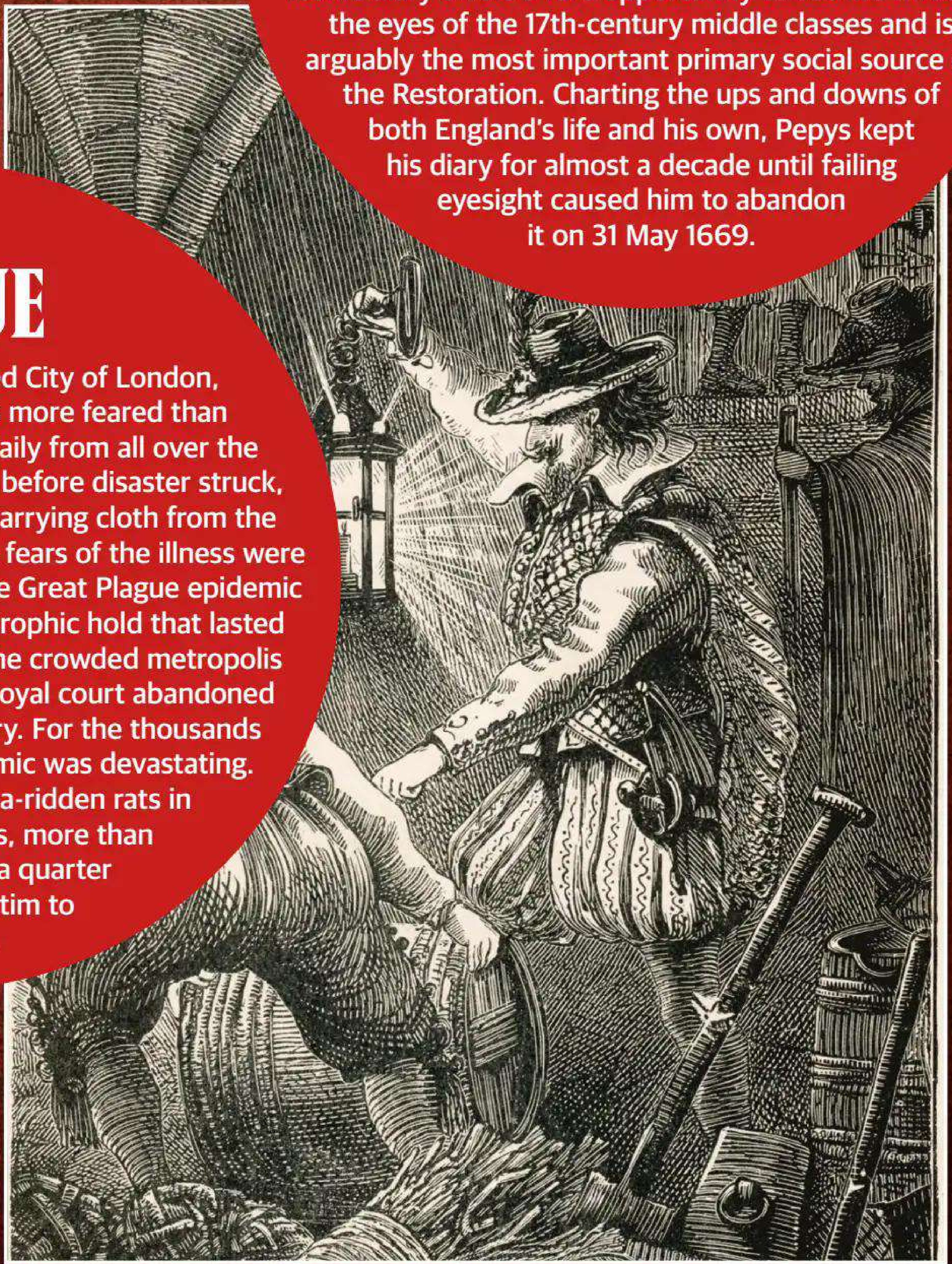
POLITICS

In the 1660s, England was still reeling from the devastating Civil War that had shattered the country, and in the City of London, passions still ran high. During the conflict, the powerful and rich city had turned against the Crown and championed the cause of republicanism. The battles might have been over, but both Londoners and Charles II remembered those dark times. The powerful magistrates of the city still viewed the king with suspicion, remembering the absolutism of his father and the cost of the conflict. They were determined his son would not follow the same path and their suspicions were so deep that, when Charles offered to dispatch royal troops to fight the fire, his offer was rejected. Yet the lord mayor, Sir Thomas Bloodworth, proved fatally indecisive, and as the fire raged unchecked, the king had no choice but to take control.

PEPYS

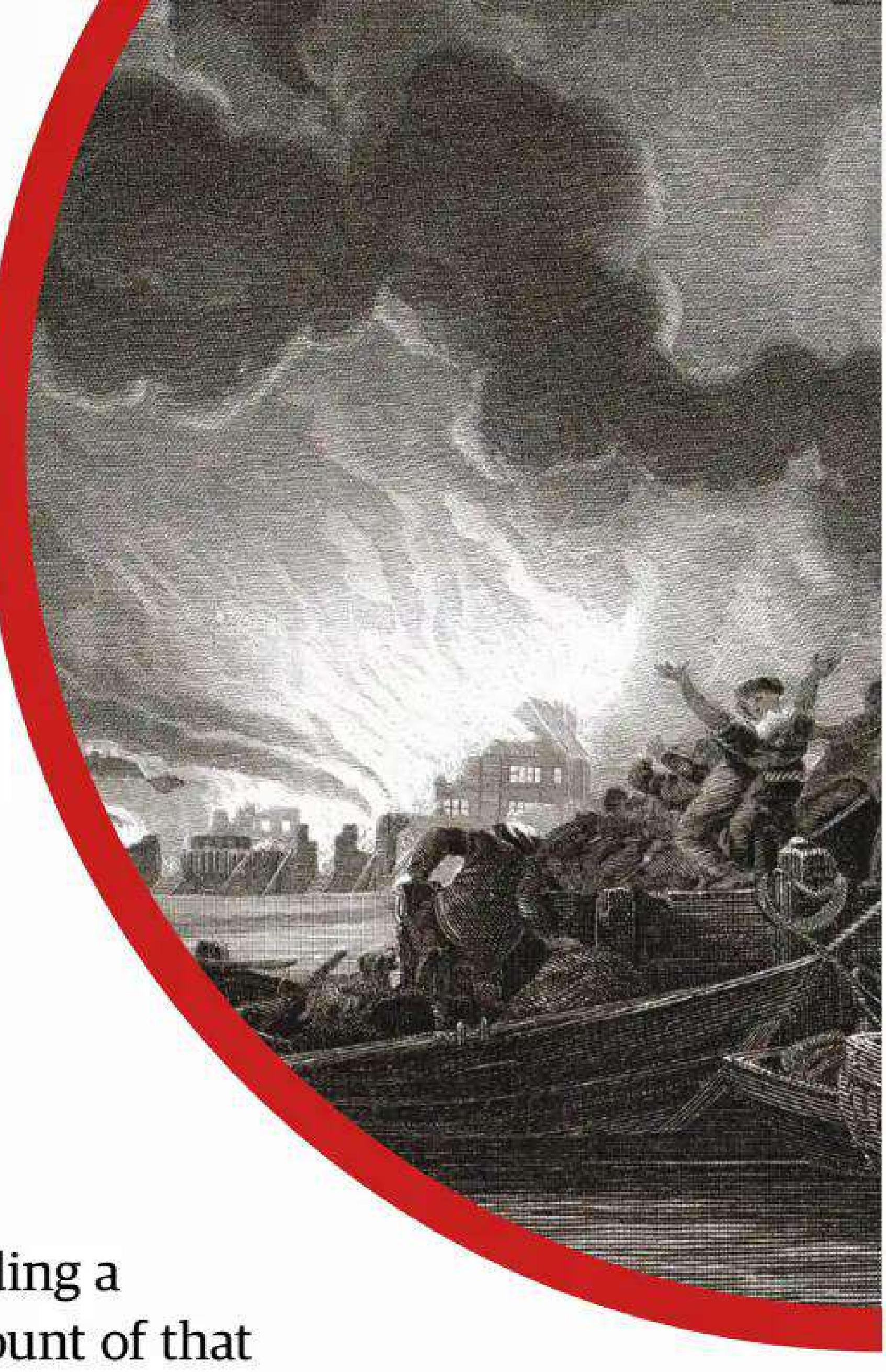
On 1 January 1660, a naval administrator named Samuel Pepys penned the first words in his diary. Within its pages he recorded not just everyday life but firsthand accounts of some of the most momentous events in 17th-century history, including intrigue, fire and plague. His was a story of success, of advancement through the ranks and into high office, yet through it all, Pepys maintained his eye for drama and a witty turn of phrase for every occasion. His iconic diary offers a rare opportunity to see life through the eyes of the 17th-century middle classes and is arguably the most important primary social source of the Restoration. Charting the ups and downs of both England's life and his own, Pepys kept his diary for almost a decade until failing eyesight caused him to abandon it on 31 May 1669.





PLAGUE

In the packed, poorly sanitised City of London, disease was rife but none was more feared than the plague. With ships arriving daily from all over the world, it was just a matter of time before disaster struck, and it came courtesy of a vessel carrying cloth from the plague-wracked Netherlands. Public fears of the illness were proven to be well-founded when the Great Plague epidemic hit London in 1665, taking a catastrophic hold that lasted well into 1666. The wealthy fled the crowded metropolis for the fresh country air and the royal court abandoned their London palaces for Salisbury. For the thousands left behind, however, the epidemic was devastating. Crammed together with flea-ridden rats in sunless tenement rooms, more than 100,000 people, or a quarter of the city, fell victim to the plague.



LONDON'S BURNING

The Great Fire was a landmark event in British history, but what sparked the inferno and how did a king try to extinguish it?

London in the autumn of 1666 was dry, dirty and dusty, no rain having fallen in ten long months. In the plague-ridden city, the wooden tenements were just waiting to go up in flames. When night fell on Saturday 1 September 1666, baker Thomas Farriner closed his Pudding Lane bakery and went to bed. As he slept, the bakehouse coals he had thought safely extinguished caught light, and before long the ground floor of the Farriner bakery was ablaze.

With flames blocking the exits, Farriner, his family and their servant fled across the rooftops. Behind them they left a maid who was too afraid of heights to follow. That anonymous, terrified girl was the first casualty of the Great Fire of London.

Strong winds blew embers and flames out into the streets, igniting the sun-bleached buildings and hay bales. As the watch rallied to the cries of "Fire!" they decided to create a firebreak by demolishing neighbouring buildings. Residents refused to give consent and with stalemate reached, the lord mayor, Sir Thomas Bloodworth, was summoned to the scene.

When Bloodworth arrived, he refused to exercise his right to demand the demolition of the buildings. Without the permission of the king, the City of London would have to bear the cost of rebuilding, and he wasn't about to take on that expense. Perhaps Bloodworth believed this was just one more fire among the many small blazes that often burned in the city, but such beliefs would be proven, catastrophically, to be incorrect.

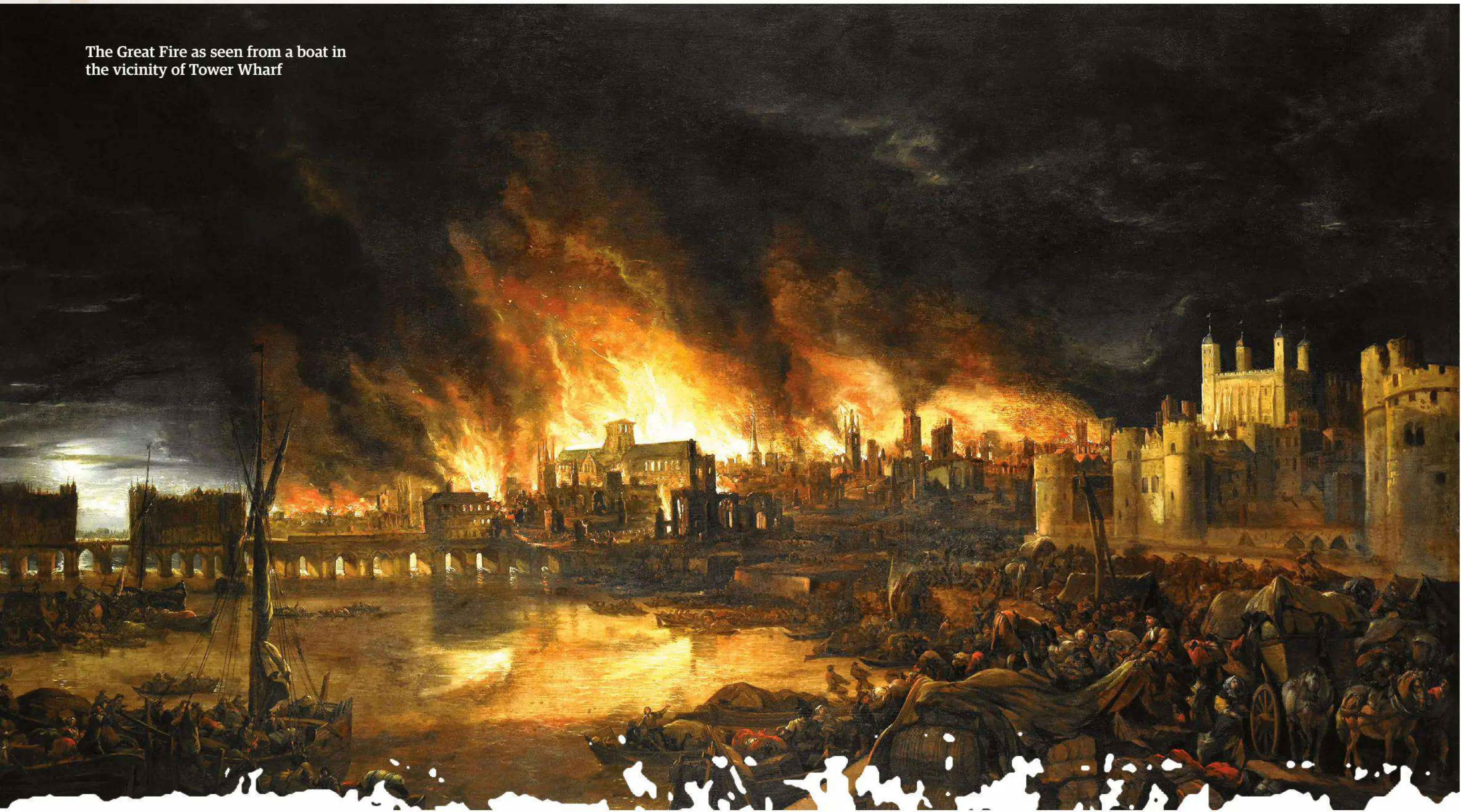
Its infernal progress seemingly unstoppable, once the fire hit the dockside and the highly combustible cargoes stored there, all chances of extinguishing it quickly were lost.

As the night sky turned red, diarist Samuel Pepys left his home and travelled by river to see the extent of the fire. He watched as the city went up in flames, churches and slums alike consumed by the inferno. Pepys recorded the progress and aftermath of the fire in his diaries, lending a unique first-hand account of that infamous time. Through his eyes we see Bloodworth falter, the royal family flourish and the people panic.

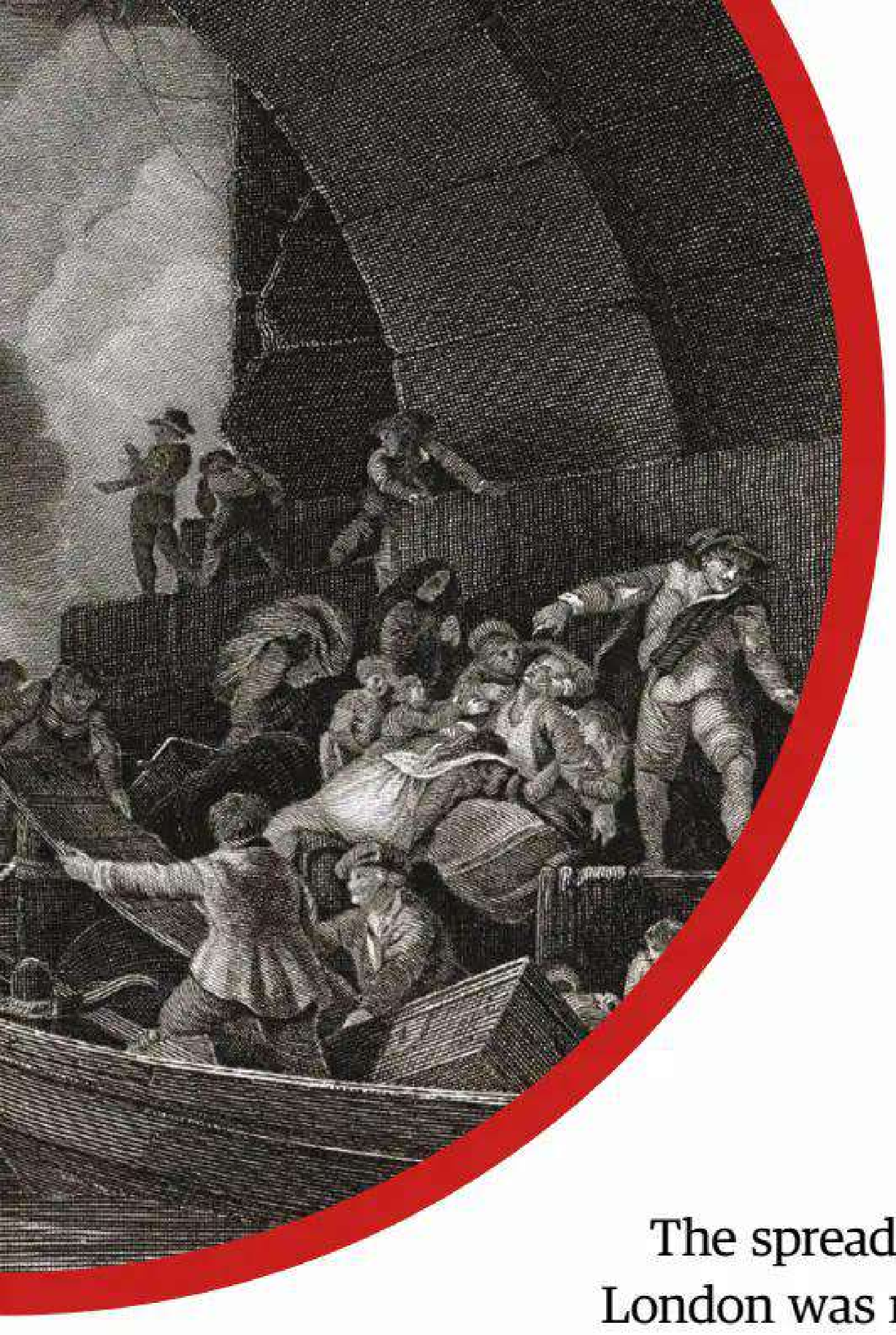
> "Strong winds blew embers and flames out into the streets, igniting the sun-bleached buildings and hay bales"

Fleeing before the raging conflagration, Londoners tried to save what they could. They hurled their belongings into boats and handcarts or even into the river. Soon the hot, narrow streets were an impassable tide of the dispossessed as thousands of people fled for their lives. Firefighters couldn't break through the panicked mass and the king, far from safe in his palace, took action.

Charles II gave the order to tear down every building in the path of the fire, hoping to stop it with firebreaks. Still the blaze spread and by Monday, the north bank of the Thames was alight, London Bridge was aflame and Southwark was threatened by winds lifting embers over the river.



The Great Fire as seen from a boat in the vicinity of Tower Wharf



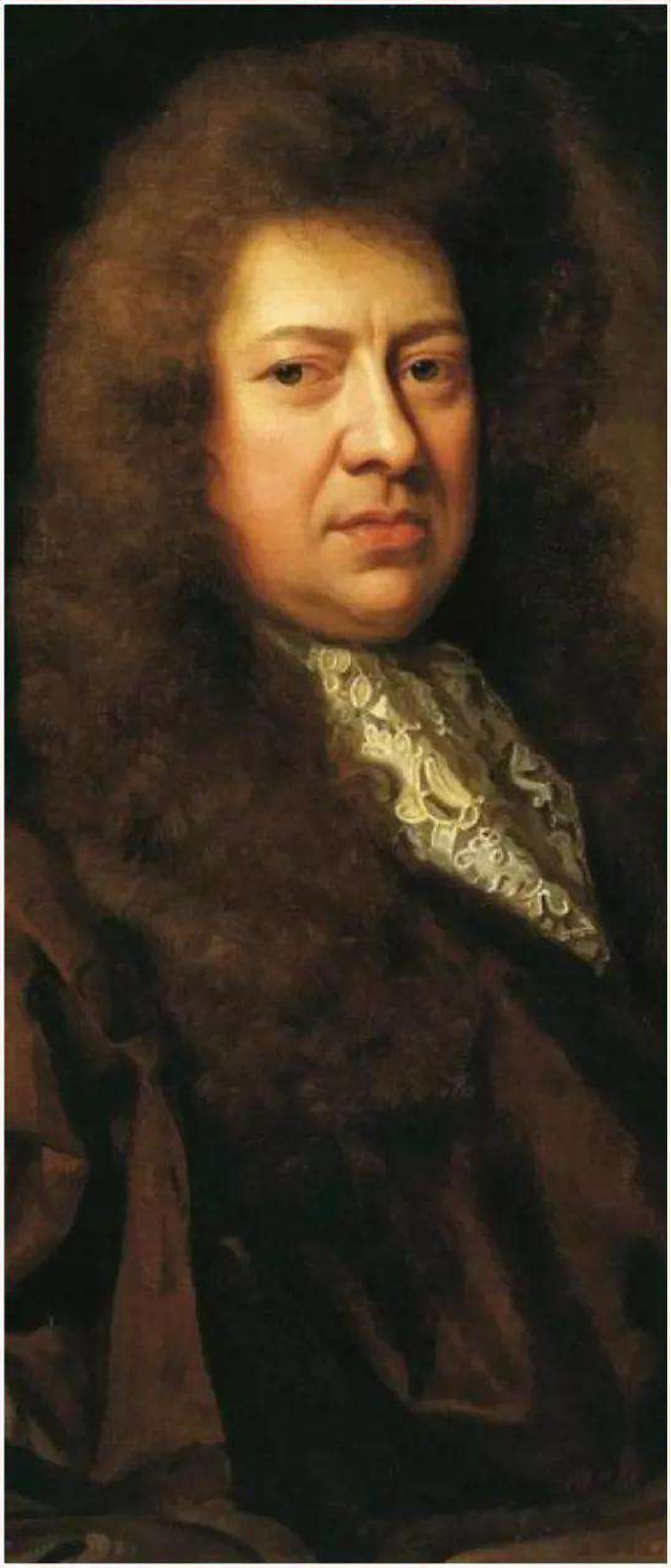
The spread of the fire into south London was mercifully stopped by a firebreak on the bridge, yet in the city there was no such luck. A firestorm engulfed the Royal Exchange, the middle-class homes of city professionals and all that stood in its way.

As civil unrest threatened, the King put his brother, the Duke of York, in charge of dealing with the fire. York took charge of the controlled demolitions, and his troops were dispatched to quell unrest in the streets. Charles II himself allegedly came into the city and pulled down buildings, throwing water onto the flames as everyone that could help did their bit.

By the time Saint Paul's Cathedral fell, pouring molten lead into the streets, it must have seemed as though the world was ending. Should the firestorm reach the Tower of London, the gunpowder stored there would go up like a bomb, and houses between it and the flames were demolished with explosives, creating a firebreak.

As the wind fell on Tuesday night, the firebreaks had finally started to do their job. The raging flames now died down, leaving thousands homeless, terrified and utterly lost in a London that had become, by all accounts, unrecognisable.

THE FIRE IN PEPYS OWN WORDS



2nd September THE SPREADING FLAMES

By and by Jane comes and tells me that she hears that above 300 houses have been burned down to-night by the fire we saw, and that it is now burning down all Fish-street, by London Bridge. …it begun this morning in the King's baker's house in Pudding-lane.

3rd September PANIC IN THE STREETS

About four o'clock in the morning, my Lady Batten sent me a cart to carry away all my money, and plate, and best things, to Sir W. Rider's at Bednall-greene. Which I did riding myself in my night-gowne in the cart; and, Lord! to see how the streets and the highways are crowded with people running and riding. for all.

4th September SAVING THE CHEESE

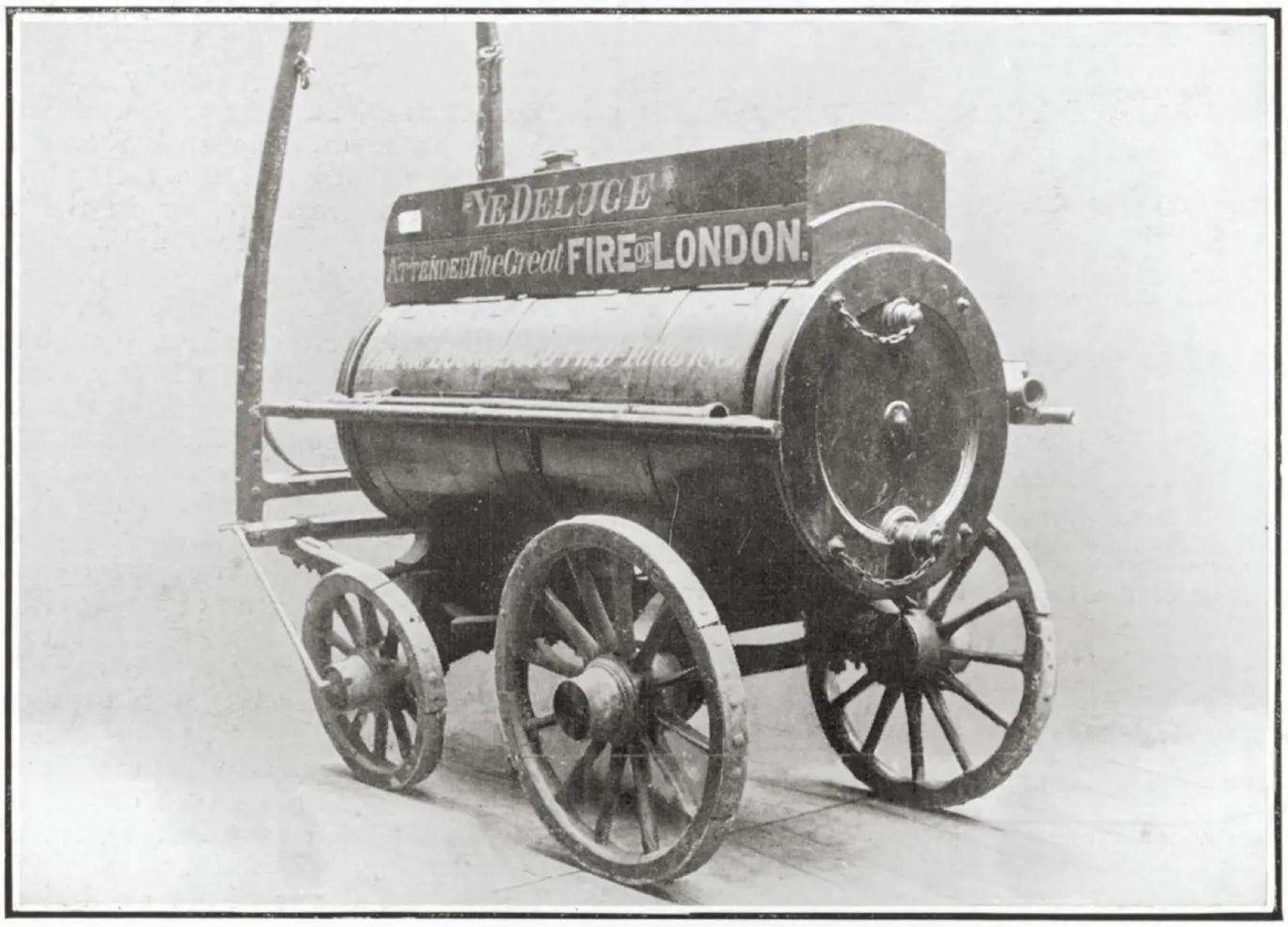
Sir W. Batten not knowing how to remove his wine, did dig a pit in the garden, and laid it in there; and I took the opportunity of laying all the papers of my office […] And in the evening Sir W. Pen and I did dig another, and put our wine in it; and I my Parmazan cheese.

5th September DEVASTATION

Lord! what sad sight it was by moone-light to see, the whole City almost on fire, …the saddest sight of desolation that I ever saw; every where great fires, oyle-cellars, and brimstone, and other things burning.

6th September CONSPIRACY

[On discovering a new fire] There is some kind of plot in this (on which many by this time have been taken, and, it hath been dangerous for any stranger to walk in the streets), but I went with the men, and we did put it out in a little time; so that that was well again.



Early Fire Engine named "Ye Deluge"

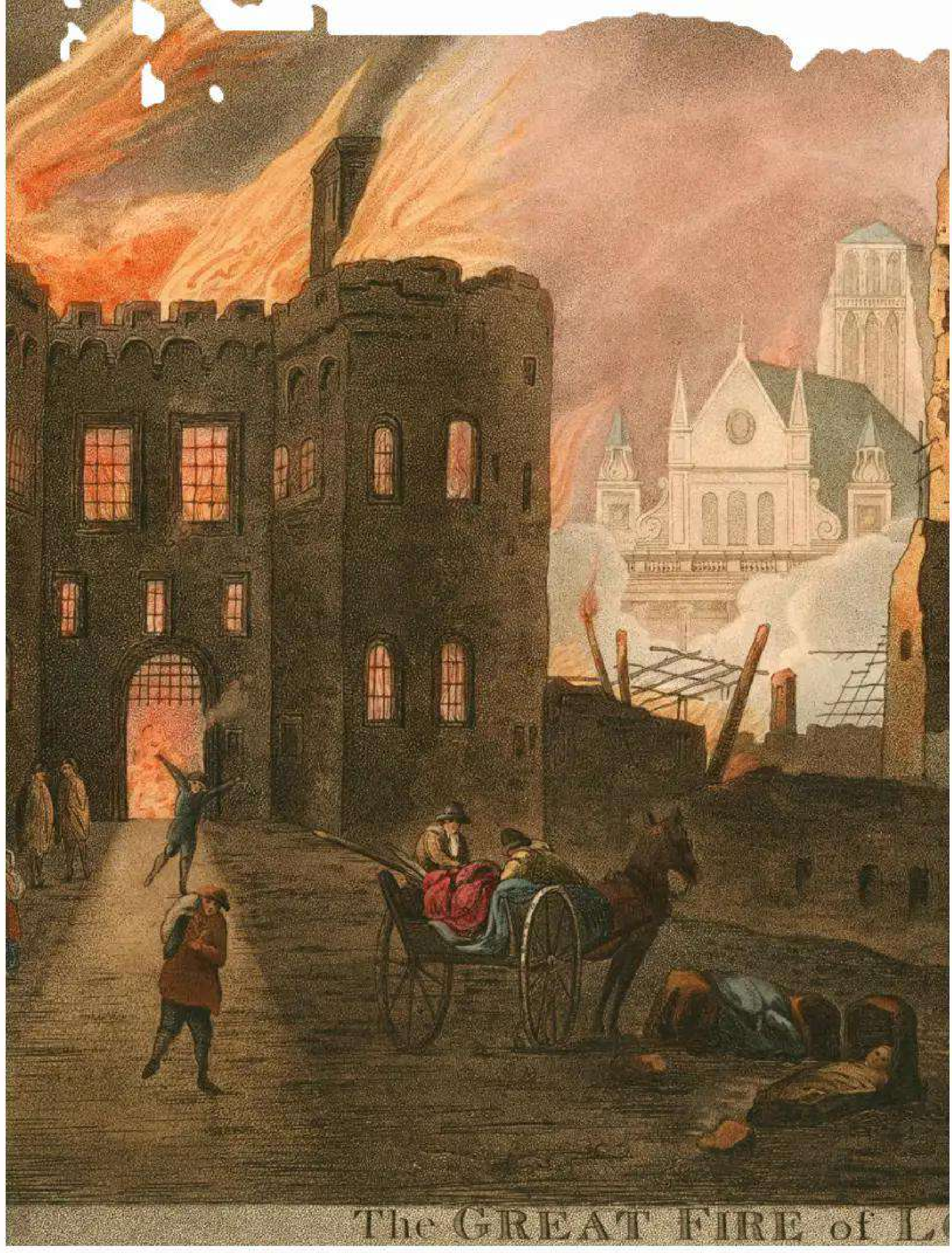
Used at the Great Fire of London, 1666, and "attended the first fire at Bournemouth.—Dr. Falls, 1867"

FIREFIGHTING IN THE 17TH CENTURY

In a city built mostly of wood, especially one that had endured a total drought since the previous November, small fires were commonplace. Quite apart from domestic candles, fireplaces and ovens, the City of London itself was full of fire hazards. Despite restrictions on where businesses could be located, smithies, foundries, and bakeries, among others, provided plenty of combustible material in the heart of the metropolis. When fires broke out, members of the watch would ring church bells and public-spirited citizens would rally to the call, sometimes with the aid of the local militias. Firefighting equipment was held in parish churches and those facing the flames used not only water, but the buildings themselves. Structures were demolished to provide firebreaks that would block the flames and prevent them from spreading. In fact, it was firebreaks, triggered by gunpowder demolitions, that finally put paid to the spread of the Great Fire of London.

THE AFTERMATH

As the flames died down, the city counted the cost of the tragedy, not to mention the casualties


The GREAT FIRE of L

On 5 September 1666, as the remains of the City of London smouldered, it finally seemed as though the worst was over. Though the immediate danger had passed, cleaning up in the inferno's aftermath would take years.

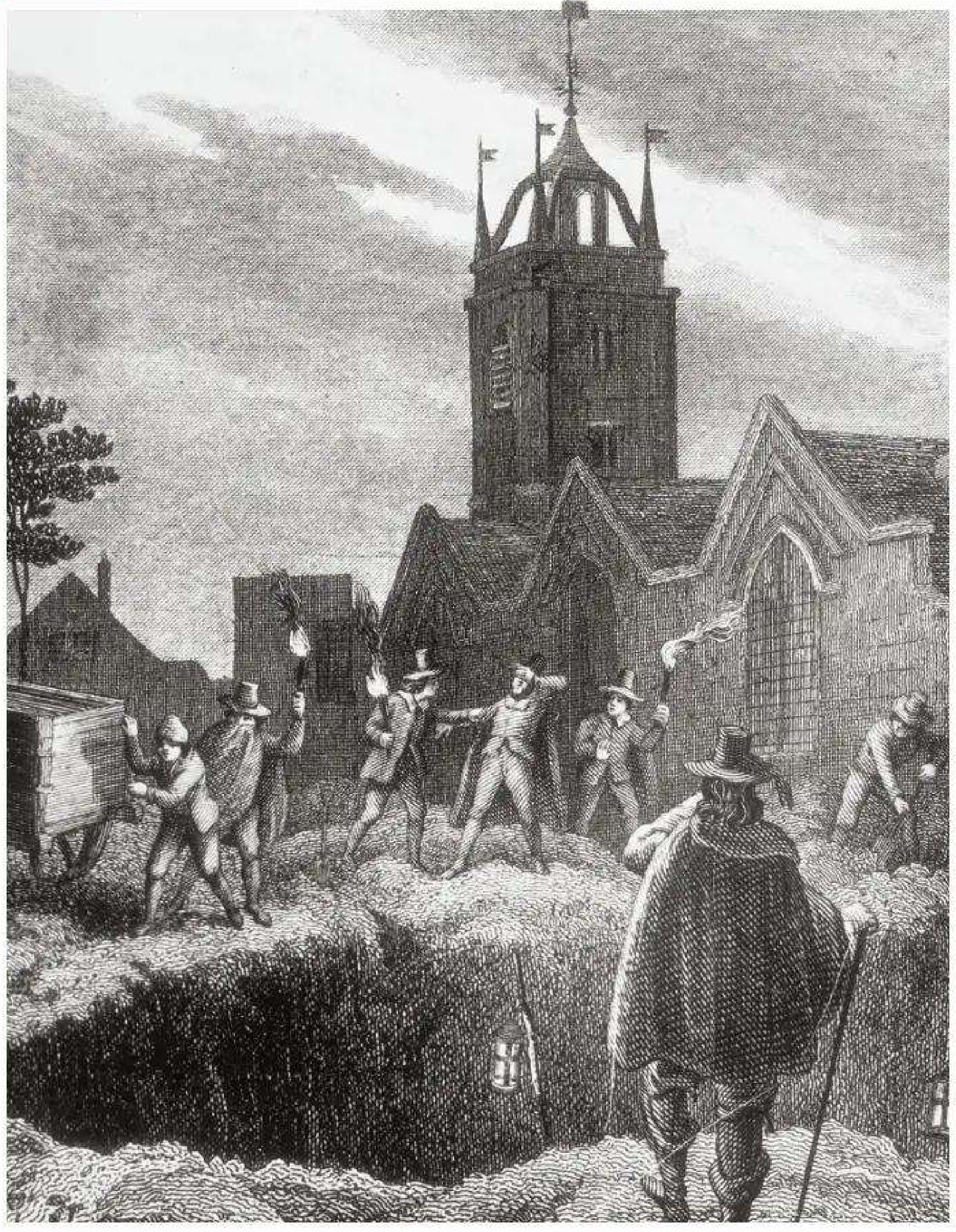
The devastated city was shrouded in smoke, small fires still burning here and there among the ruins, bright and hot amid the ash. Enormous numbers of casualties were expected, yet when the toll of the dead was counted, it was, unbelievably, just six, certainly less than ten. Of course, this accounts only for those whose remains were found. The fire burned so hot and through such tightly packed areas that it's possible many others, particularly the infirm, old and very young, were completely cremated and lost among the ashes of their homes. We can never know the true human cost of the fire, though if it was truly just six, it's nothing short of miraculous. For the survivors, there were to be precious few miracles in the days to come - tens of thousands of people left with nothing as a harsh winter fell over the City of London. In the months that followed the Great Fire, those who lost everything to the flames found that surviving the inferno had only been the beginning of their woes. Now they began to fall victim to rampant disease, or the bitter cold and starvation, not to mention the mobs seeking foreigners and seditious traitors to lynch.

Baker Thomas Farriner, in whose bakehouse the fire had started, was quick to point the finger elsewhere. He claimed that he wasn't to blame, and wasn't about to be hung out to dry. Instead, Farriner was determined that someone else should bear the responsibility for the catastrophe, and there was no shortage of candidates. The search for someone to blame began in earnest before the fire was extinguished, and that search would tragically lead an innocent man to the Tyburn tree (see page 77).

Perhaps the most tragic story to come out of the Great Fire of London is that of Robert Hubert, a simple-minded young man with a habit of confessing to starting fires that had nothing to do with him. Hubert died on the famous Tyburn Gallows after he confessed to having firebombed the bakery. He claimed that French Catholics in the employ of the Pope himself had paid him to commit the crime but now his conscience had forced him to confess. Hubert was entirely innocent, of course, and after his death it was discovered that he had not even been in the country on the night of the fire, but had been at sea. Yet anti-Catholicism was rife and rumours spread even quicker than the fire that conjured up papist conspiracies and suspicion.

> *"Those who lost everything to the flames found that surviving the inferno had only been the beginning of their woes"*

King Charles II invited proposals for rebuilding the shattered city and he received them in abundance, ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous. At the same time, compensation and property disputes came in at such a rate that a special Fire Court was established to ensure a speedy resolution. Some of the destroyed buildings seemed to have multiple owners who wanted to claim compensation. Conversely, structures that had been built illegally, appeared to have no owners at all. The Fire Court was in charge of resolving these disputes and settling all cases as quickly as possible.



THE FIRE IN NUMBERS

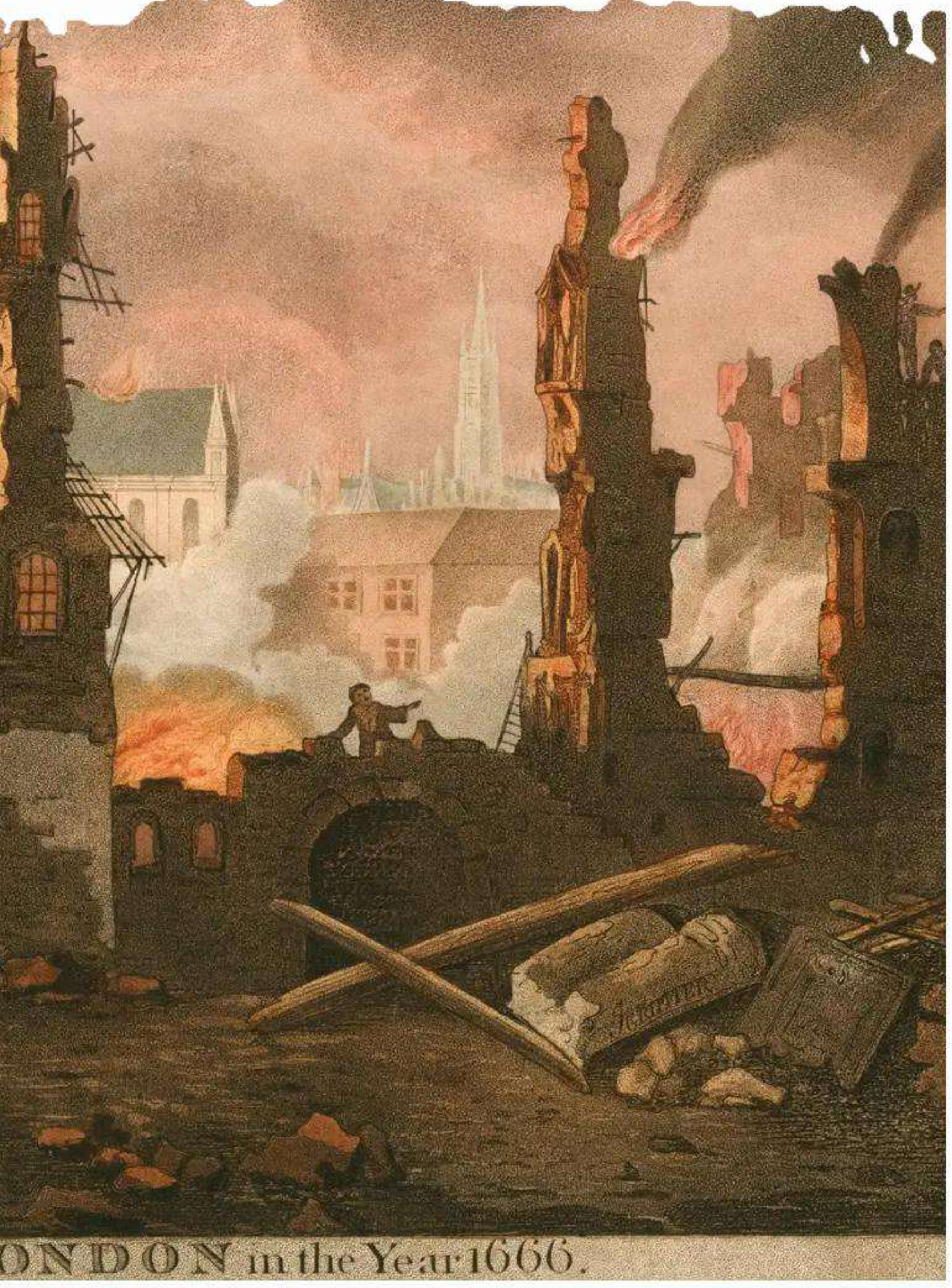
The fire burned at
1700°C

2/3RDS
of London Bridge was burned, saving Southwark and the city south of the river

1
cathedral was razed to the ground

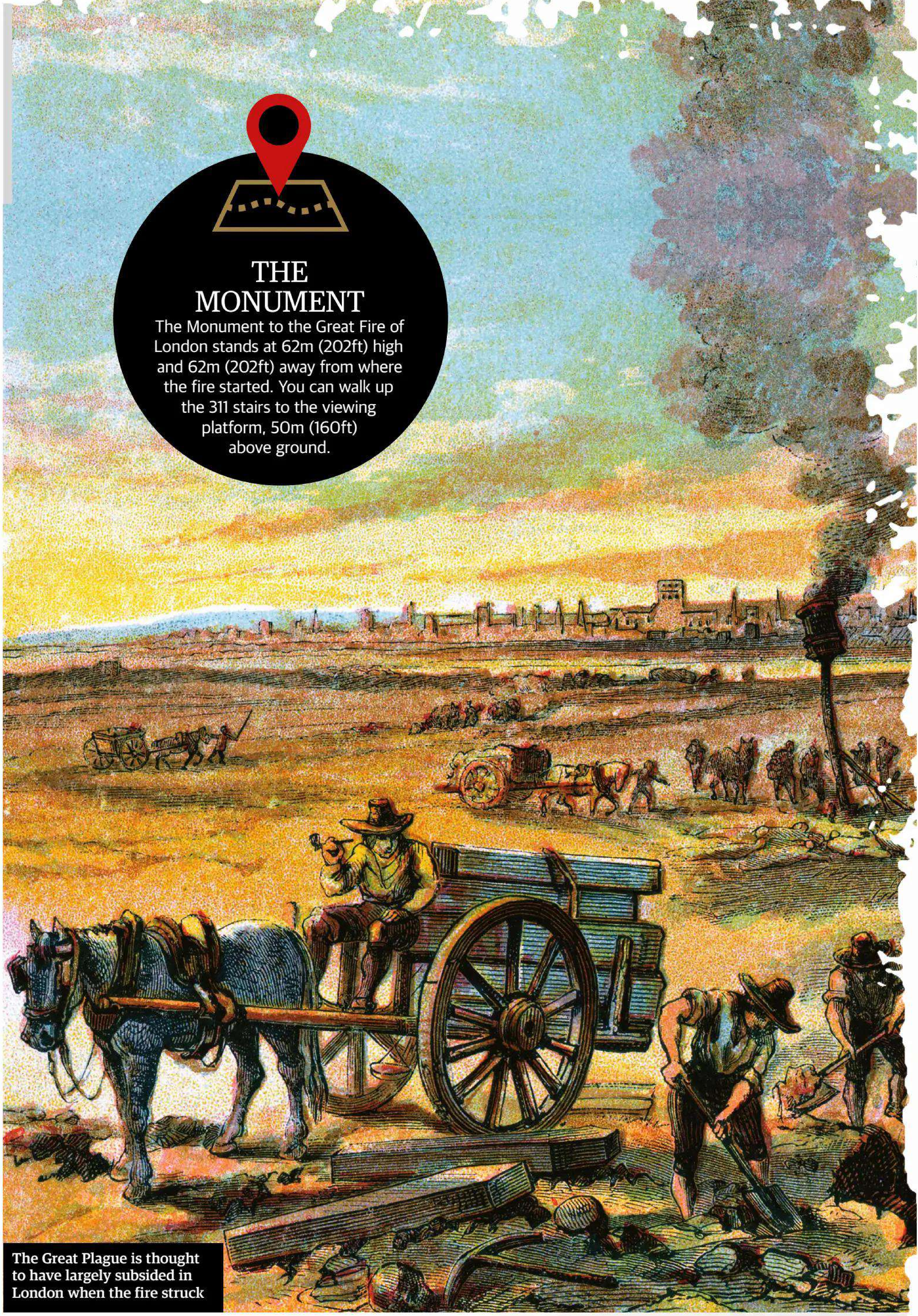
The fire burned for
3 NIGHTS

6 DEATHS
were recorded


ONDON in the Year 1666.

The responsibility for rebuilding the City of London fell to the six commissioners for rebuilding, who included Sir Christopher Wren and Dr Robert Hooke. Although many proposals for a new layout were put forward, in the end it was largely rebuilt according to the old street-plan, due to costs and public preference. Though no radical restructuring took place, the look of the city was completely transformed. Gone were the tottering tenements that blocked out the sun, with the narrow alleyways replaced by wider, safer streets and access to the Thames improved. Where once timber slums had crowded along the wharves, now the waterways were clear, the highly combustible goods stored there kept safely away from residences. Under strict new laws, all buildings had to be made of stone or brick, the better to resist fire. The churches that had burned as well as Saint Paul's Cathedral were rebuilt according to new designs. Charles II also ordered Hooke and Wren to design a memorial monument to commemorate the fire - a 202ft tall column with a "secret" underground science lab and paranormal views of the city.

For those who moved into new buildings, conditions were greatly improved, yet the wait for accommodation was long, and slums were far from a thing of the past for Londoners.



THE MONUMENT

The Monument to the Great Fire of London stands at 62m (202ft) high and 62m (202ft) away from where the fire started. You can walk up the 311 stairs to the viewing platform, 50m (160ft) above ground.

The Great Plague is thought to have largely subsided in London when the fire struck

The monetary cost of the fire was

£10 MILLION

more than

£1 BILLION TODAY

13,200 houses were destroyed

Pepys saved

1 PARMESAN CHEESE

© Alamy, David Wyatt, Mary Evans, TopFoto

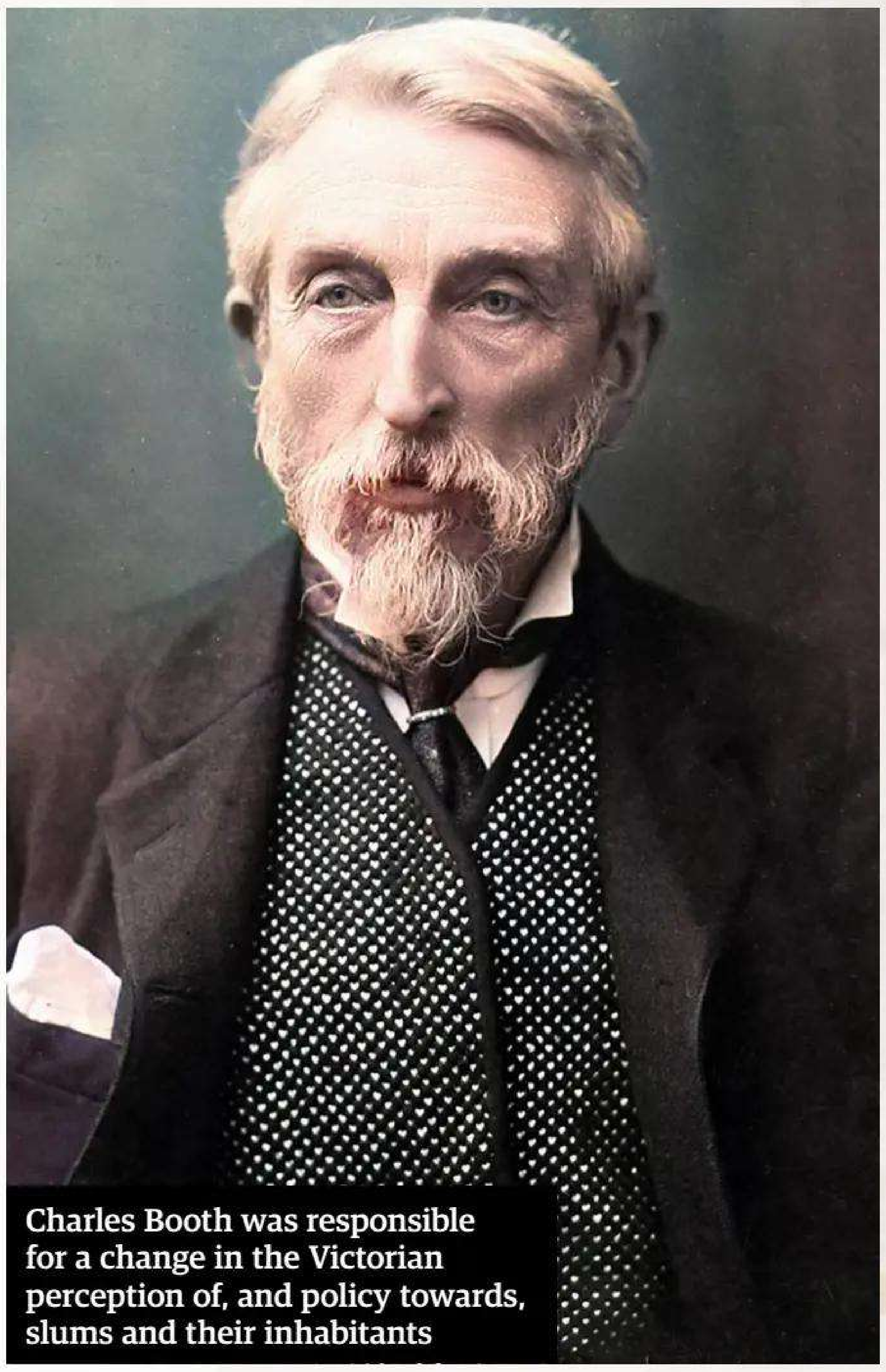
SLUMMING IT

Far from being paved with gold, the streets of Victorian London were teeming with dirt, despair, disenfranchisement and deprivation for the city's poorest inhabitants

London was the beating heart of Victoria's British Empire, and yet the capital of the civilisation that the sun never set upon hid a bloated, fetid disease behind the elegant promenades and squares it showed to the rest of the world. London was riddled with slums, where the poorest of the city's denizens lived packed in cheek-by-jowl, with filth and ordure as their neighbours. To be a slum dweller was to live a miserable life curtailed by grinding poverty, hunger, exploitation, addiction and disease, a life that very few well-to-do Victorians believed its victims deserved to escape. Slum dwellers were, by and large, the 'Undeserving Poor', with little to no entitlement to parish relief, and few opportunities to achieve a decent or dignified job – no right-thinking Victorian lady would have someone like that among the servants; no upstanding Victorian gentleman would trust one of them in his business. If they were that desperate, they could always go to the workhouse, couldn't they? The fact that they didn't showed that their life of crime, of low entertainment and even lower morals, was endemic to them.

Would you be surprised to learn that it was the Victorians who created the rhetoric we now hear governments use against long-term benefits claimants, social housing tenants and the chronically underqualified? 'They don't want to work. They're not as sick as they're making out. They should have paid attention at school when they had the chance. The only way they'll change their feckless behaviour is if they're penalised.' For the Victorians, the people who fell through the cracks of society did so deliberately. Perhaps it was so unthinkable that such deprivation could exist en masse in the ancient, storied capital of the world's richest, most advanced, most powerful empire, that the only way they could make sense of it was to believe that the slum-dwelling poor were the architects of their own suffering.

> "To be a slum dweller was to live a miserable life curtailed by grinding poverty"



Charles Booth was responsible for a change in the Victorian perception of, and policy towards, slums and their inhabitants

Slums grew like a cancer on the rapidly changing face of 19th-century London, and the majority were created by the transformation that the city experienced in the late Georgian and early Victorian era. Up until the 19th century, the city had featured many more open spaces than it does today. In the 18th century, market gardens had supplied London with fruits and vegetables – Georgian Londoners even had access to homegrown melons and pineapples. With the rise of Britain's overseas empire and new and faster ship technologies, such delicacies no longer had to be grown at home – they could be transported halfway across the world in the ironclad belly of a steamship. The market gardens were no longer needed, and fell into disrepair. Meanwhile, before Wren and his ilk had rebuilt the old city in Portland stone after the Great Fire in 1666, medieval and Tudor London had been riddled with marsh meadows that were of little use to anyone. As London's rivers were encased in stone embankments and underground culverts, these patches of traditionally underused land dried out. And as the city grew to swallow what had once been villages on its outskirts – Hackney, Islington,

© Getty; Alamy

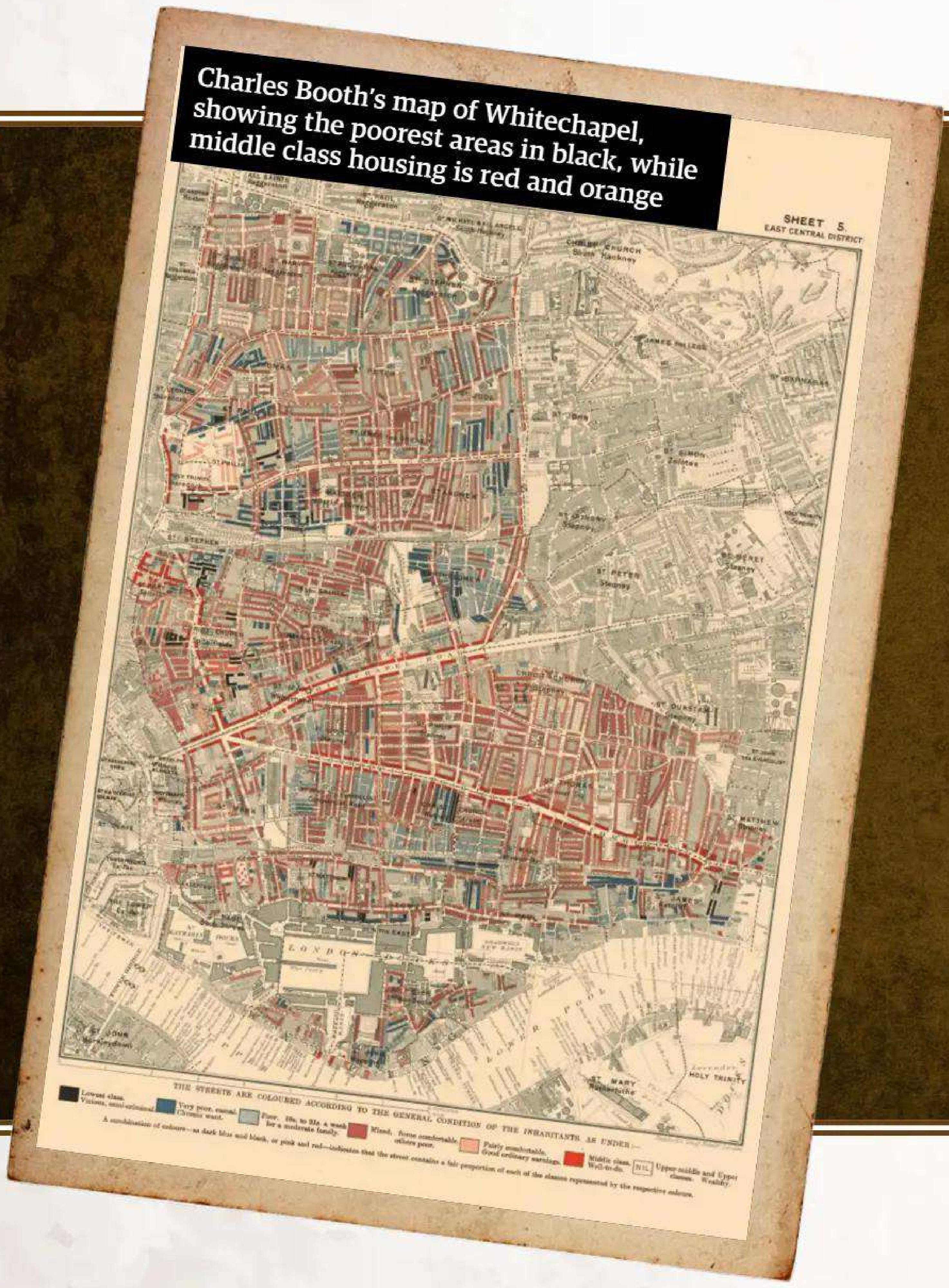
Greenwich, Chelsea, Kew – what in the past had been thriving country farmsteads were abandoned and became yet more gaps in London's tangled urban fabric.

These waste grounds were where slums arose. In the 'Potteries and Piggeries' near Notting Hill, potters who had traditionally lived near sources of London clay found themselves sharing their space with pig keepers who had been forced to move away from their traditional site in Tottenham Court Road. Brickmakers too, a notoriously rowdy group primarily composed of young, single, hard-drinking men, moved into the area, and soon it became known as Cut Throat Lane. Little changed since medieval times, but by the mid-19th century the area had become a shanty town. Not only was there no sanitation infrastructure, the waste from pig farming soon built up in the boreholes from which the potters and brick makers extracted their clay. One of these slurry pits was so large it was nicknamed The Ocean. In 1850, Charles Dickens wrote of the place that it was "a plague spot scarcely equalled for its insalubrity by any other in London".

Gentrification tried to come for the Potteries and Piggeries in the 1830s with the building of a horse racing course called the Kensington Hippodrome. It wasn't a success, and many visitors complained about the appearance and behaviour of the nearby slum dwellers, who had a right of way over the land. The Hippodrome closed in 1842 but it would take the entire redevelopment of the land of the Ladbroke Estate, completed in the 1870s, to effect any real transformation. Today, the area is one of the wealthiest in London, home to aristocrats, celebrities and the super-rich. The Ocean is now the leafy, flower-filled Avondale Park. There is still

Slum housing was precarious and unregulated; tenants like these could easily be evicted by their slum landlord

"Poor Londoners were desperate for housing as the city expanded and they were crowded out of their previous homes by wealthier incomers"


Charles Booth's map of Whitechapel, showing the poorest areas in black, while middle class housing is red and orange

SHEET 5
EAST CENTRAL DISTRICT
THE STREETS ARE COLOURED ACCORDING TO THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE INHABITANTS AS UNDER:-

MAPPING POVERTY

Booth's research highlighted the plight of slum dwellers in London and challenged the Victorians' views on them

On Charles Booth's maps, the London streets are displayed in an array of colours, with sunny gold and red threads picking out the presence of the wealthy, well-to-do and the ordinary and comfortable. But blocked onto every district in solid, funereal blues, greys and black lie the instances of the worst poverty and deprivation too. Here the poor are scraping by on 18 shillings or less a week (roughly the equivalent of one day's wages for a skilled tradesman in 1900), gained through casual work… or worse. Booth's key for his poverty maps describes areas labelled in black as the domain of the "Lowest class. Vicious, semi-criminal"; the stereotypical Victorian slum dweller who was believed to spend what ill-gotten gains they had on gin while their children starved: petty thieves, prostitutes, card-sharps, gamblers and tramps. Today, Booth's maps are criticised for their colour-coding and the way it makes the poor look like a disease raddling the London streets, but the impact of those big blots of black ink was to demonstrate to the public that poverty was, in fact, hidden all around them, and that for many seemingly prosperous and hard-working families, the deprivation of the slums was little more than a lost job or family crisis away. Booth's research led to the concept of the poverty line, the theoretical minimum income that a family could live on, and also contributed to the creation of the old age pension and, consequently, the welfare state and the NHS.

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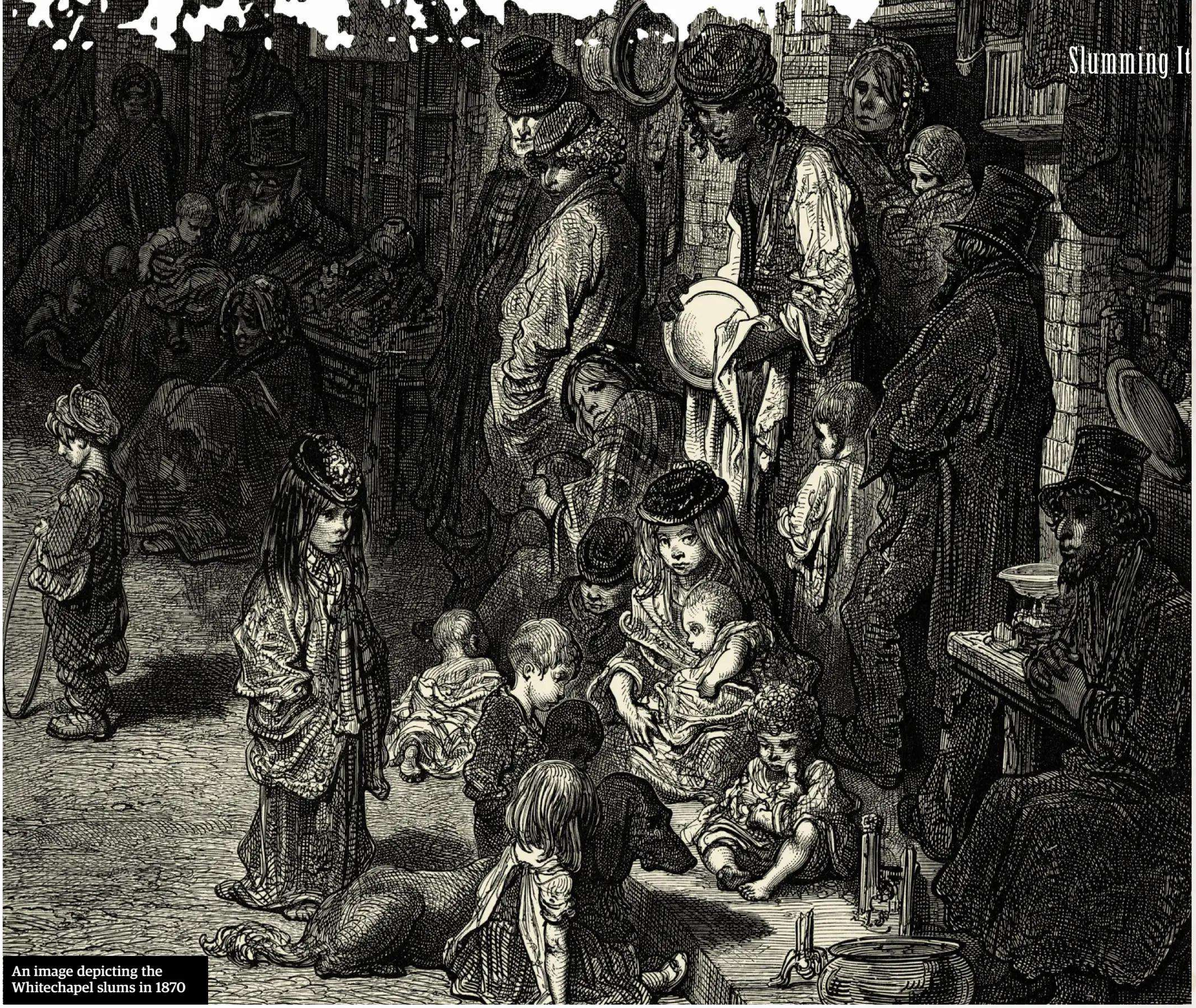
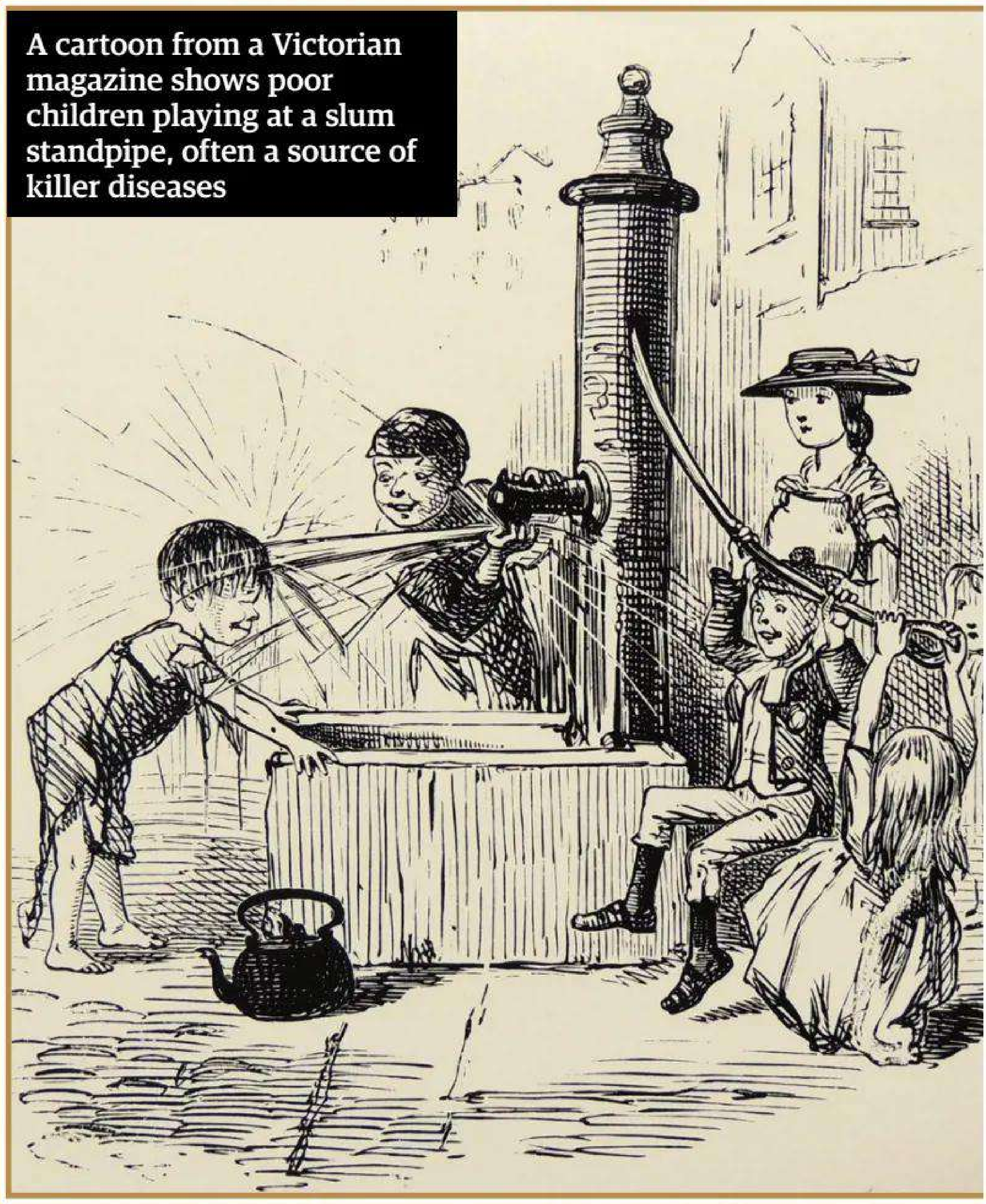


An image depicting the Whitechapel slums in 1870

poor housing and tragedy to be found on these not-so-mean streets though; nearby is the site of Grenfell Tower, a social housing high-rise which in 2017 was the site of the UK's worst residential fire since World War II. Caused by a faulty fridge freezer, the fire, which killed over 70 people and injured hundreds more, was significantly worsened by inadequate building materials and lax safety standards.

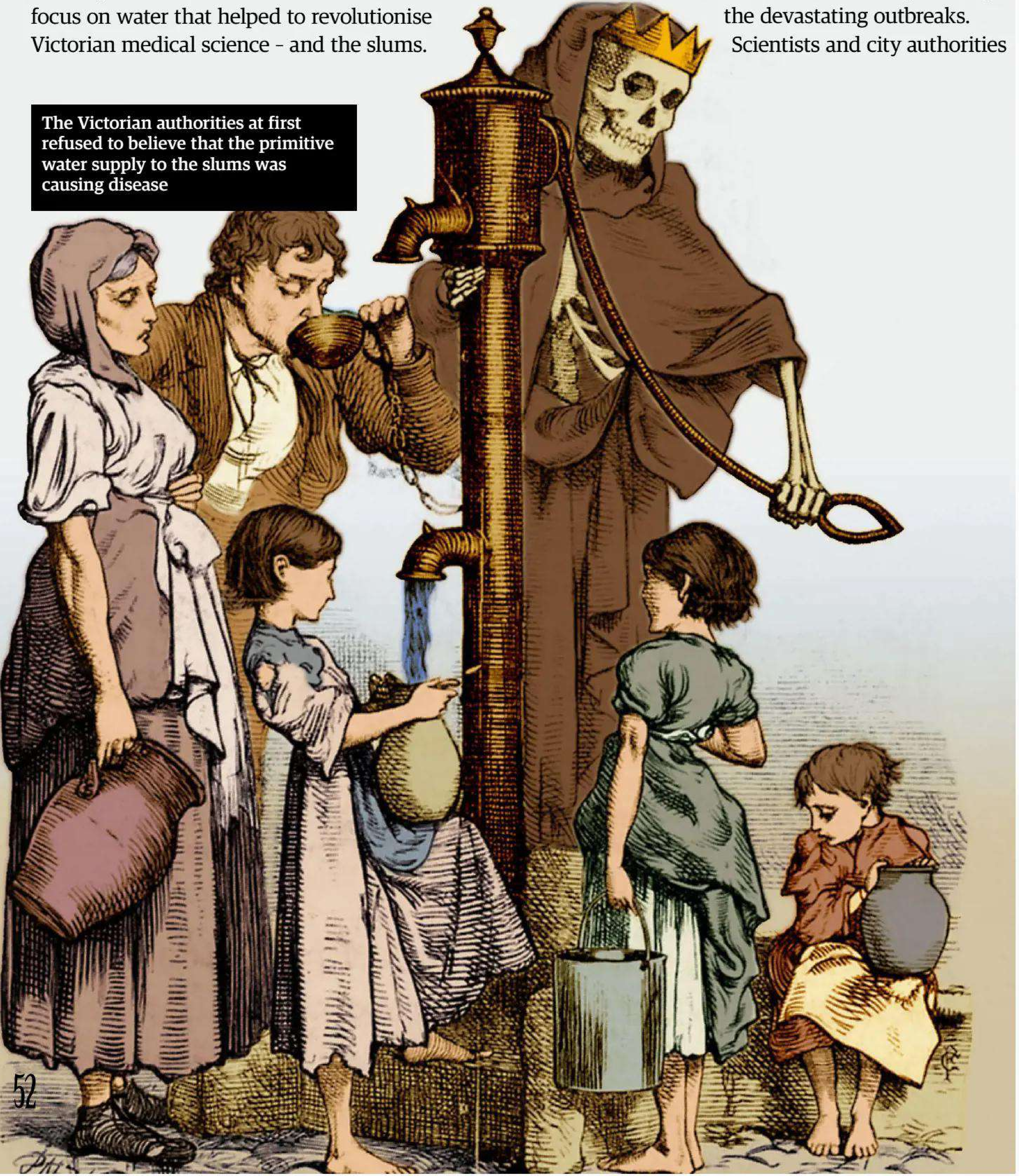
Poor building and safety standards would be familiar to many Victorian slum dwellers. The Potteries and Piggeries had been self-built by its dwellers, but many slums were the work of unscrupulous builders. Poor Londoners were desperate for housing as the city expanded and they were crowded out of their previous homes by wealthier incomers. Landlords looking to make a relatively quick buck would let parcels of waste ground – those old market gardens, farmyards and marshes – from the estates or corporations that owned them. With leases that ran for a maximum of 21 years, there was no incentive for these developers to create proper housing, as it would soon be torn down again. Thrown up onto land that was already damp and sinking into a muddy strata of centuries of sewage or farmyard filth, places like Tyndall's-buildings (aka Spread Eagle Court) in Holborn, Agar Town near King's Cross, and Tomlin's New Town in Paddington, were named after the slum lords that built them and featured foundationless, one-up-one-down, back-to-back hovels with dirt floors, walls just half a brick thick, no running water or sanitary facilities and only open hearths for cooking on, and no paved streets or drains in between. Accessed through a warren of stinking alleys, rough courtyards here and there provided locations for water standpipes and open defecation, the earth-closet privies between the buildings often unusable because they were overflowing with raw sewage from the cesspits below. In such conditions, disease ran rife.

Cholera had arrived in Britain from India with the advent of the massive increase in international shipping brought about by the Victorian British Empire. Potentially fatal, it causes severe vomiting and diarrhoea, contact with which infects new victims. But Victorian scientists were still on the cusp of understanding disease transmission – in fact, it was cholera that began to bring their



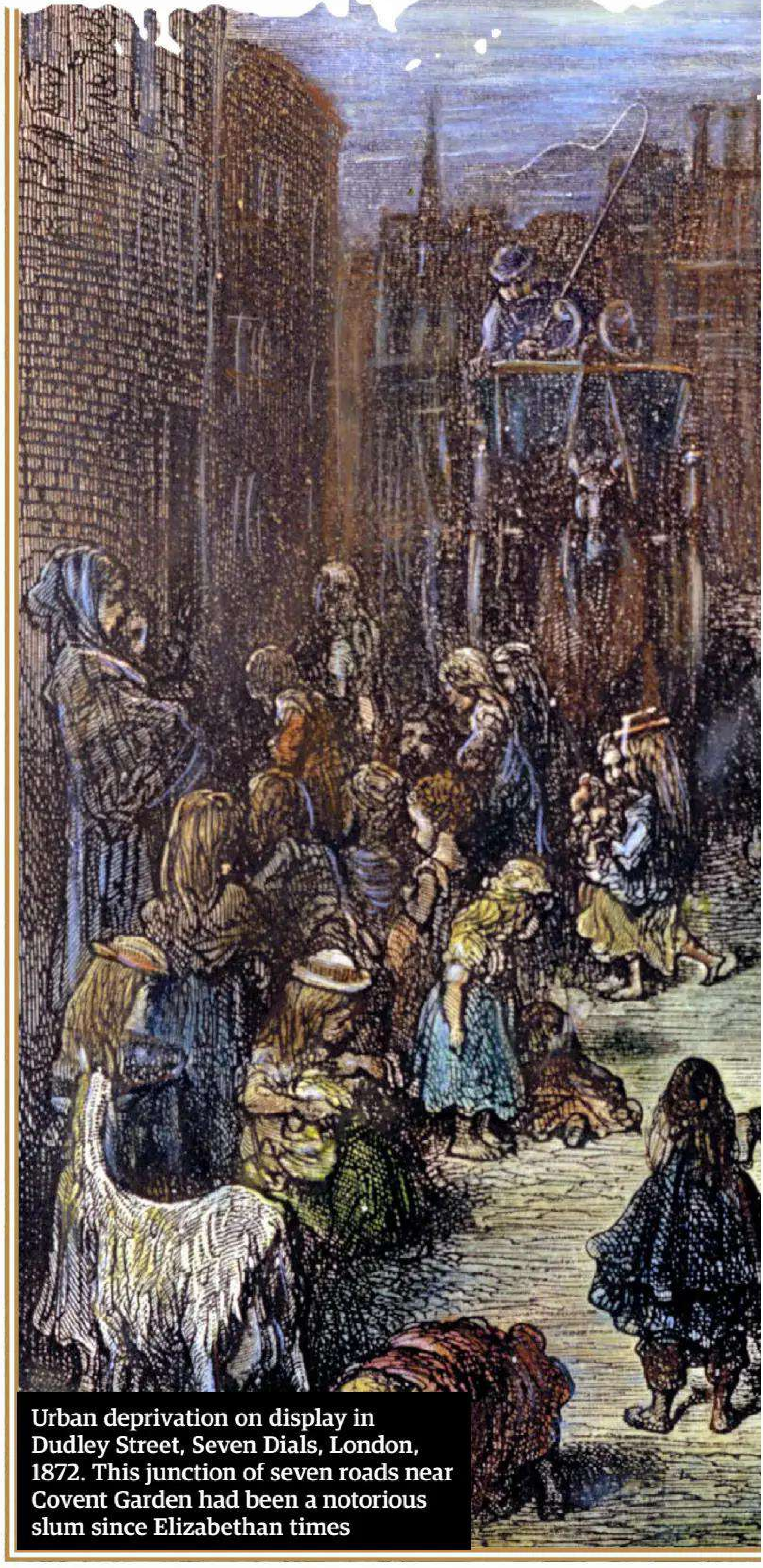
A cartoon from a Victorian magazine shows poor children playing at a slum standpipe, often a source of killer diseases understanding into focus. At the beginning of the Victorian era, ideas about how disease was borne and spread hadn't really changed since medieval times. The dominant theory was that disease was spread by 'miasma' – a 'foul air' that coalesced over sources of dirt. Its stinking smell was its signature. Dr William Farr, the commissioner of the 1851 London census and an epidemiologist who was one of the first collectors of medical statistics, believed that the very soil of London was riddled with miasma, which rose occasionally like marsh gas and, in yet another example of the poorest Londoners bringing their suffering on themselves through their filthy lifestyle choices, disgorged itself into the slums. We now know of course that this is not the case and that cholera, like other diseases, is transmitted through bacterial exposure, but it took the 1854 cholera outbreak and the efforts of a Yorkshire doctor named John Snow to start getting this fact through to the highly resistant Victorian medical establishment.

Before coming to London in 1837, Snow had dealt with cholera in the coal-mining village of Killingworth. His experiences there had made him a proponent of good hygiene and healthy living: he was teetotal, vegetarian, and, crucially, he only drank 'pure' distilled water. It was Snow's focus on water that helped to revolutionise Victorian medical science – and the slums.



The Victorian authorities at first refused to believe that the primitive water supply to the slums was causing disease

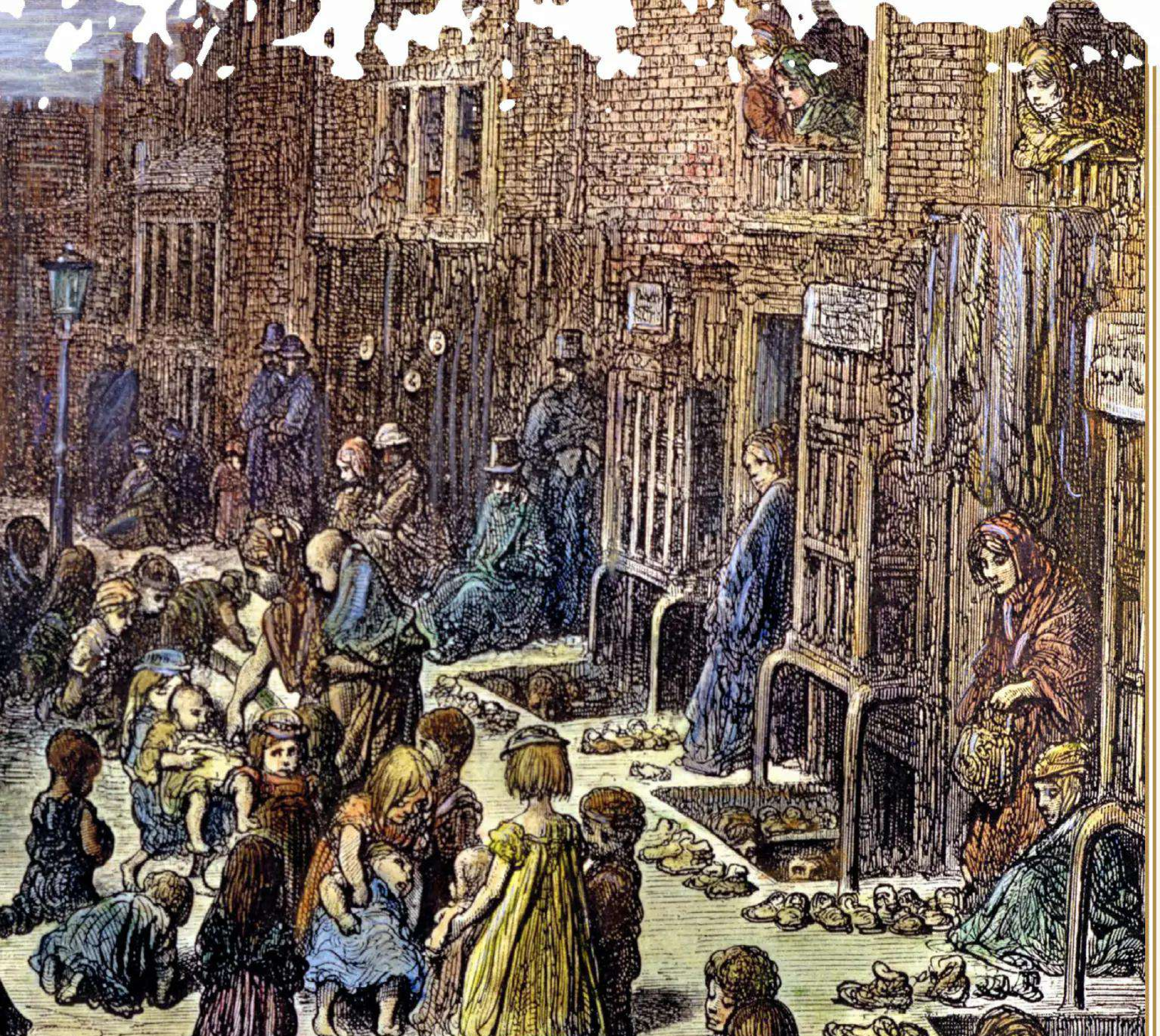
During the cholera outbreak that centred around Broad Street in Soho, then an overpopulated slum built on an unsanitary backbone of cowsheds, slaughterhouses and grease-boilers, Snow analysed the water that residents took from the local pump, and found it riddled with fecal matter and bacteria. London at the time was the scene of fierce competition between several different water companies, and Snow had observed that the smaller ones, which tended to filter and purify their water, had less presence in areas that were affected by cholera, while the bigger companies that drew directly from the River Thames were almost always the suppliers to areas that experienced the most disease and death. Snow discovered that the Broad Street pump was contaminated with cholera-laden raw sewage, and this was how the disease was spreading through the nearby slums. Authorities eventually cleaned up the Broad Street pump and replaced its handle, but after the worst of the cholera epidemic had passed, they squeamishly refused to consider Snow's research into how the disease was actually spread. Snow was an early proponent of germ theory, and he argued that it was ingesting water contaminated with cholera-ridden fecal matter that was actually causing the devastating outbreaks. Scientists and city authorities alike tried their best to ignore and even discredit his evidence, and it would take the work of a later Victorian social reformer to really bring about infrastructural change in the slums.

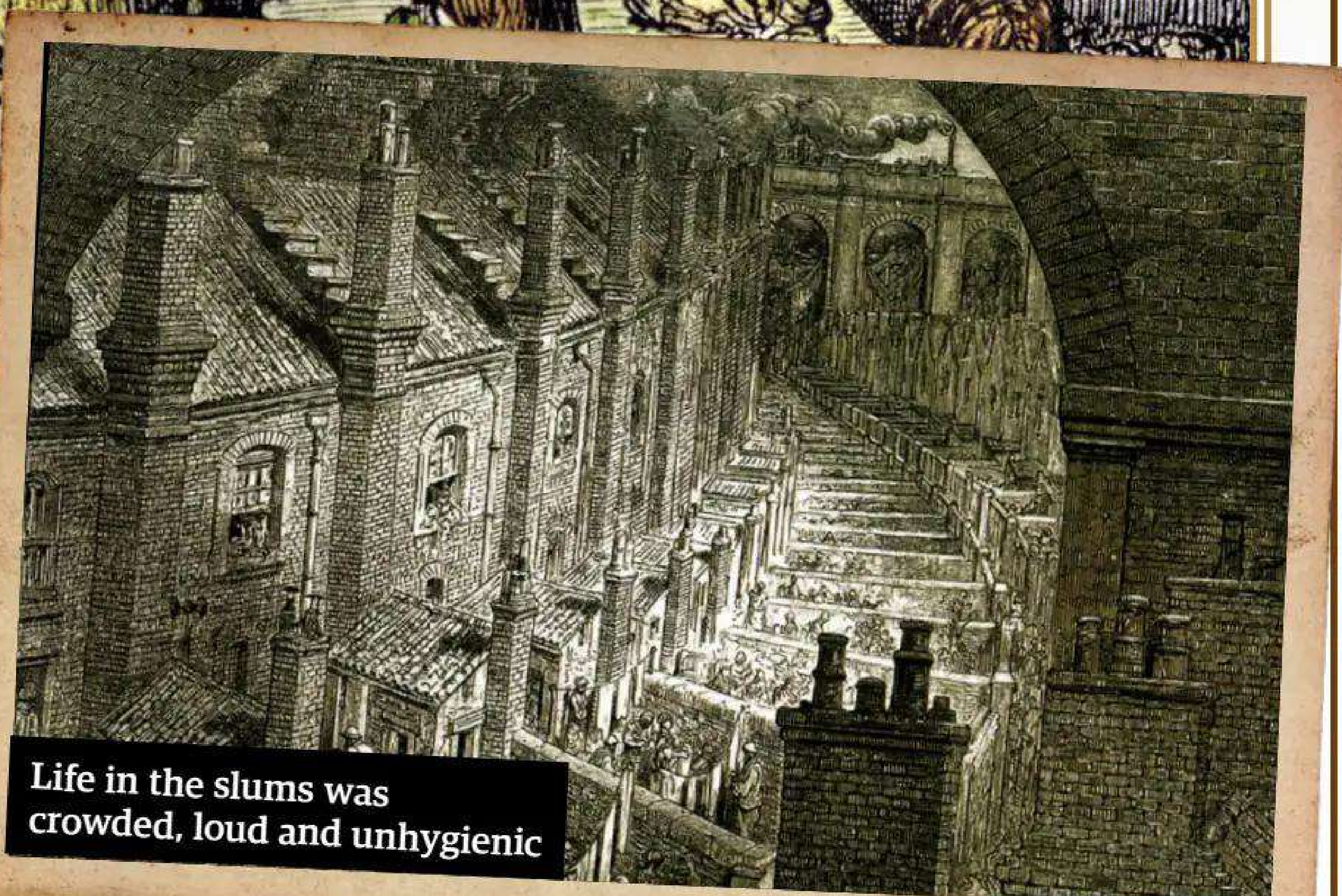


Urban deprivation on display in Dudley Street, Seven Dials, London, 1872. This junction of seven roads near Covent Garden had been a notorious slum since Elizabethan times

"Snow discovered that the Broad Street pump was contaminated with cholera-laden raw sewage"

Like the misguided Dr William Farr, Charles Booth was interested in statistics and census data. A wealthy shipowner, Booth was influenced by a school of philosophy called positivism, which holds that all genuine knowledge can be proved by facts and evidence – an outlook deeply appealing to the rich industrialists who, instead of adopting the Victorian vogue for mythmaking, spiritualism and the supernatural that was so popular among the aristocratic classes, were inheritors





Life in the slums was crowded, loud and unhygienic

of the 18th-century rationalism that continued to fuel the Industrial Revolution. Booth was the author of a multi-volume book – by its third edition in 1903 it comprised 17 volumes – called *Life and Labour of the People in London*, in which he went into exhaustive detail about the working lives and living conditions of London's poorer classes.

Booth's book was revolutionary. After analysing Farr's census he declared the data inadequate, unsatisfactory and skewed, embarking instead on his own intensive research. His research revealed that 35 per cent of people in the East End of London alone lived in abject poverty; in slum housing without adequate access to drinkable water, sanitation, sufficient heating (in the Victorian era, Britain was in the throes of what has now been dubbed the Little Ice Age, a climactic event characterised by lower than normal temperatures), nourishing food or decent warm clothing. And unlike many other Victorians, even those who thought themselves philanthropists, Booth didn't blame the poor for the social ills visited upon them. He blamed the casual labour that didn't guarantee working men and women long-term employment or proper wages that they could spend on decent accommodation, clothing and food. He did away with the idea that poverty and social class were inextricably linked, and crucially he blamed the slums for the existence of their inhabitants, not the other way around.

Booth's research is not without fault – his descriptions of social classes are still loaded with negative descriptors and in some cases, outright racism and antisemitism, focused particularly on Irish and Jewish immigrants. But within his book, he showcased 'poverty maps' on which Londoners could see, in full colour, the overwhelming prevalence of the poverty that hid behind the leafy avenues and elaborately designed boulevards of the imperial city – and that something had to change. Booth's work was what finally transformed the Victorian perception of the slums, and put their inhabitants on the path to what, one day, would become a better standard of living.

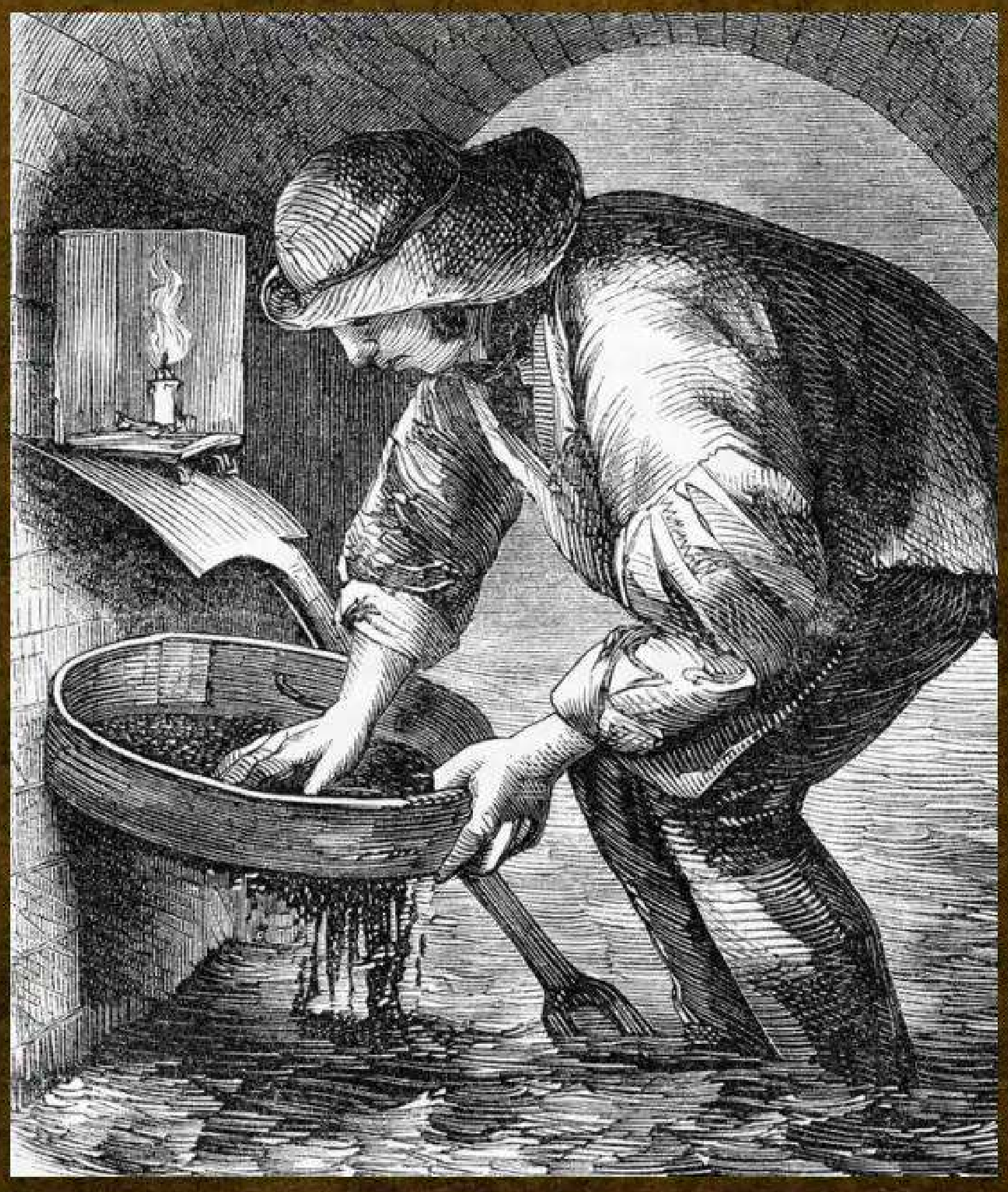
NAMING THE SLUMS

The origins behind Victorian terms for slums

Thanks to the Victorian contempt for slum dwellers, there were (and are) numerous colloquial terms for slums that existed to further demean and other their inhabitants. 'Warren' refers to a rabbit burrow, and while its principal meaning is to describe the narrow, twisting alleys that make up slum streets, it also connotes rabbits' tendency to breed quickly and often until their underground home is overrun, causing competition for resources that breeds starvation and aggression. For Victorian moral absolutists, the implication of projecting this animal behaviour onto slum dwellers is clear. Prostitutes, in particular, were often described as living in warrens.

'Rookery' is one of the oldest terms for a slum and is often found describing those that had existed since medieval or Tudor times, such as St Giles Rookery. Rooks, a type of crow, roost in colonies made up of untidy, sprawling nests; their social groups are noisy and raucous and rooks are notorious for stealing. The term was often used to describe the dead-end alleys that criminals used to either funnel their marks into or protect themselves from other ne'er-do-wells. Rookeries were the homes of street urchins and other criminals; dangerous areas that were best avoided.

Shanty towns are slums made up of shacks and hovels, largely temporary and usually made out of materials that have been scavenged. These would usually grow up near a source of subsistence income like a rubbish tip – or worse. Rag and bone pickers, street sweepers and toshers – those who picked through Victorian sewers in the hope of finding coins or other valuables – might live here.



A Victorian tosher at work. These slum dwellers were so poor their only source of income was picking through the sewers

© Getty; Alamy

THE GREAT STINK

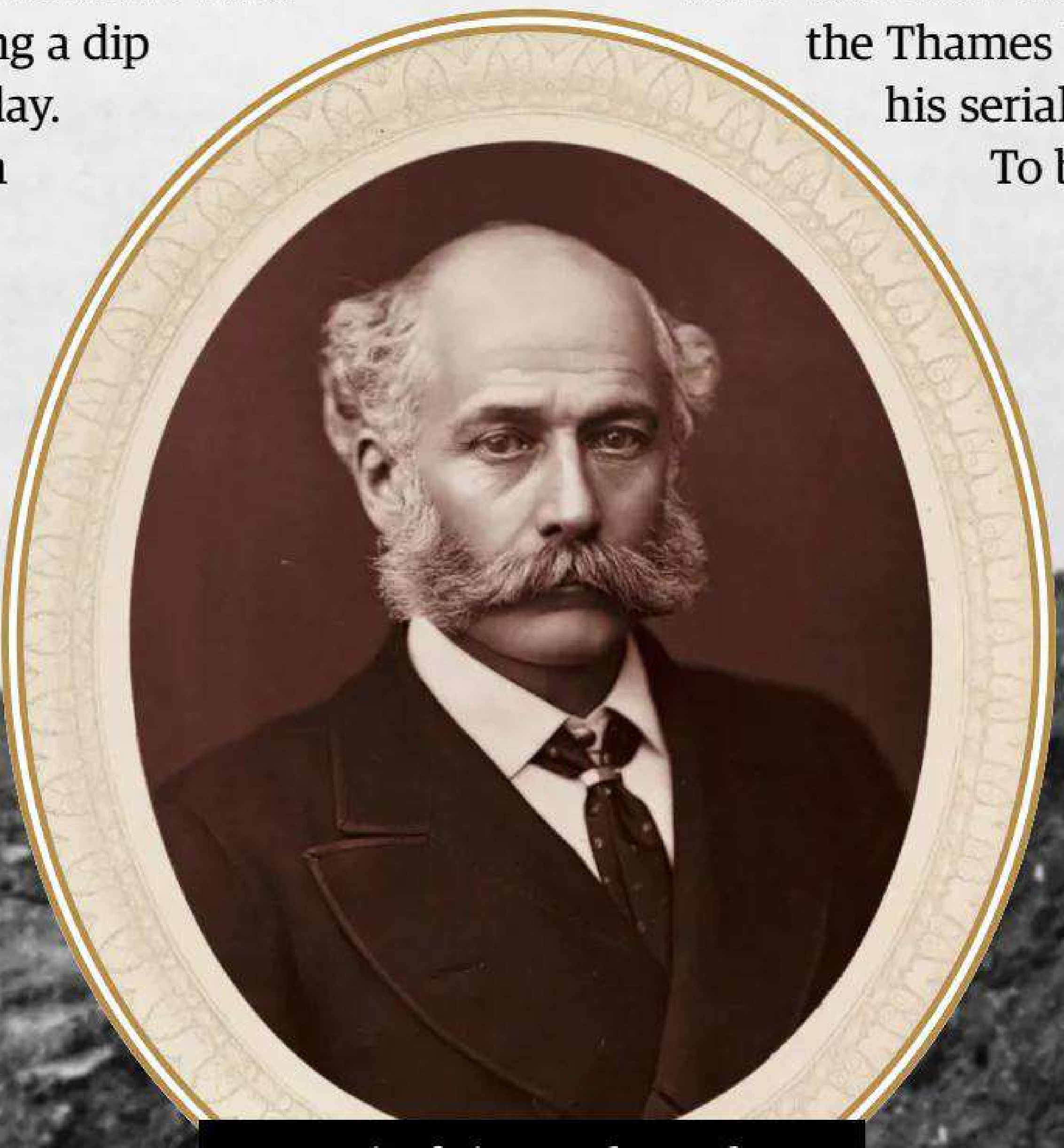
There was a horrible whiff around the Houses of Parliament in the summer of 1858 and for once, it was nothing to do with bad politicians

Evidence of human settlements along the river Thames dates far back into the Bronze Age, but London as a permanent settlement was only established on the north bank after the 1st century CE Roman invasion of Britain. We have a pretty good idea of what this river looked like as it snaked past the wood and stone fortifications of Londinium 2,000 years ago: verdant banks of reeds teeming with water fowl and salt marshland that ran into lazy dark waters, roiling with silvery schools of fish. With an area of around 350 acres, Londinium itself was a tiny fraction of the size of London today and had a population that peaked at around 60,000, before it was abandoned with the fall of Roman Empire and repopulated again centuries later. The future capital city and one of the world's major metropolises was once dwarfed by this anaconda of a waterway that meandered in great loops for miles before it emptied into the North Sea. And it was a healthy, clean river. Locals wouldn't have wanted to drink the brackish water in the Thames but Londoners back then wouldn't have thought twice about taking a dip in the shallows on a hot day. Today, the Port of London Authority restricts swimming in the Thames to a stretch upriver of Putney Bridge in west London, listing hazards that include strong currents, river vessels… and sewage discharges.

But despite this city of nearly 10 million people washing and flushing toilets on a daily basis, the Thames isn't anywhere near as dirty as it was in the mid-19th century, when it was choked with the runoff from smoke-belching factories, freshly minted in the height of the Industrial Revolution; when abattoirs and refuse collectors used the river as a convenient dumping ground, and when the water was so thick with human effluent that it was said to "ooze" rather than flow. The satirical *Punch* magazine published a number of cartoons on the state of the Thames, including "Dirty Father Thames" in 1848, which ran with a poem by William Newman: "Filthy river, filthy river, Foul from London to the Nore, What art thou but one vast gutter, One tremendous common shore…" Newspapers such as the *Times* regularly ran with headlines damning the foul condition of the river water and even Charles Dickens wrote about the Thames being "a deadly sewer" in his serialised novel *Little Dorrit*.

To be fair on the Victorians,

Coins and other artefacts that were lost over the years and found in the Northern Outfall Sewer


A portrait of Sir Joseph Bazalgette, who was knighted in 1874 for his pioneering sewerage system and contribution to public health

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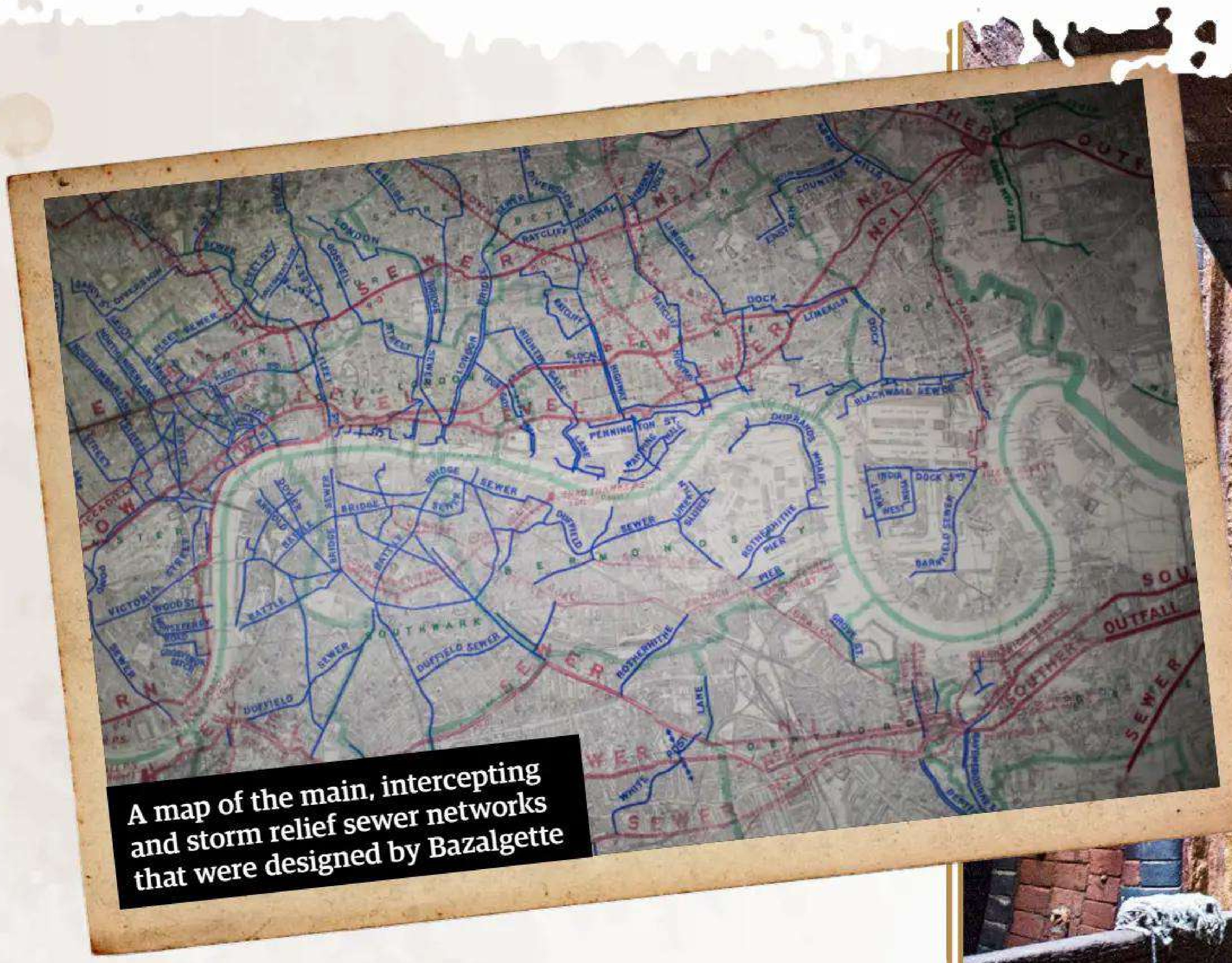
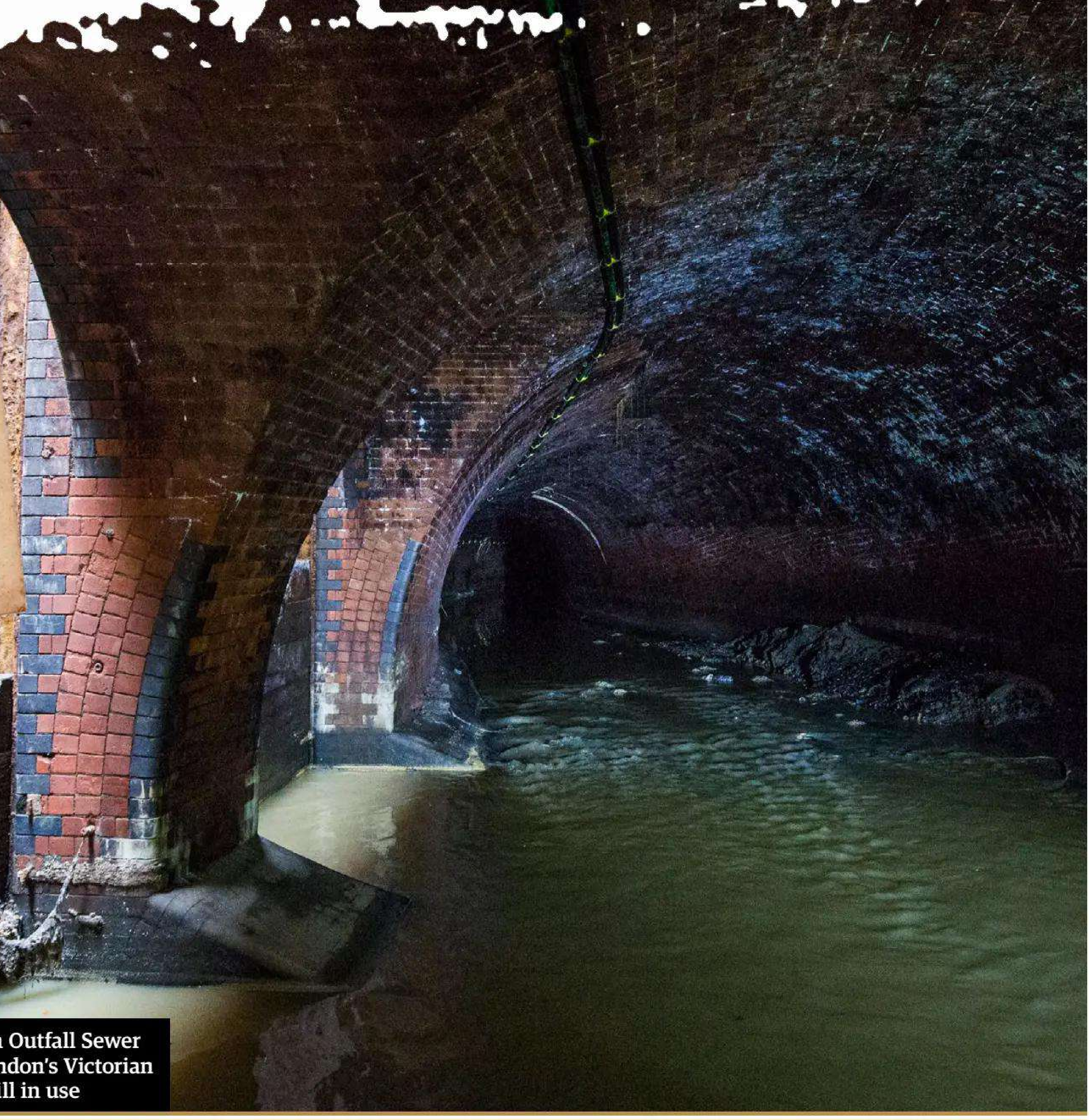


A map of the main, intercepting and storm relief sewer networks that were designed by Bazalgette

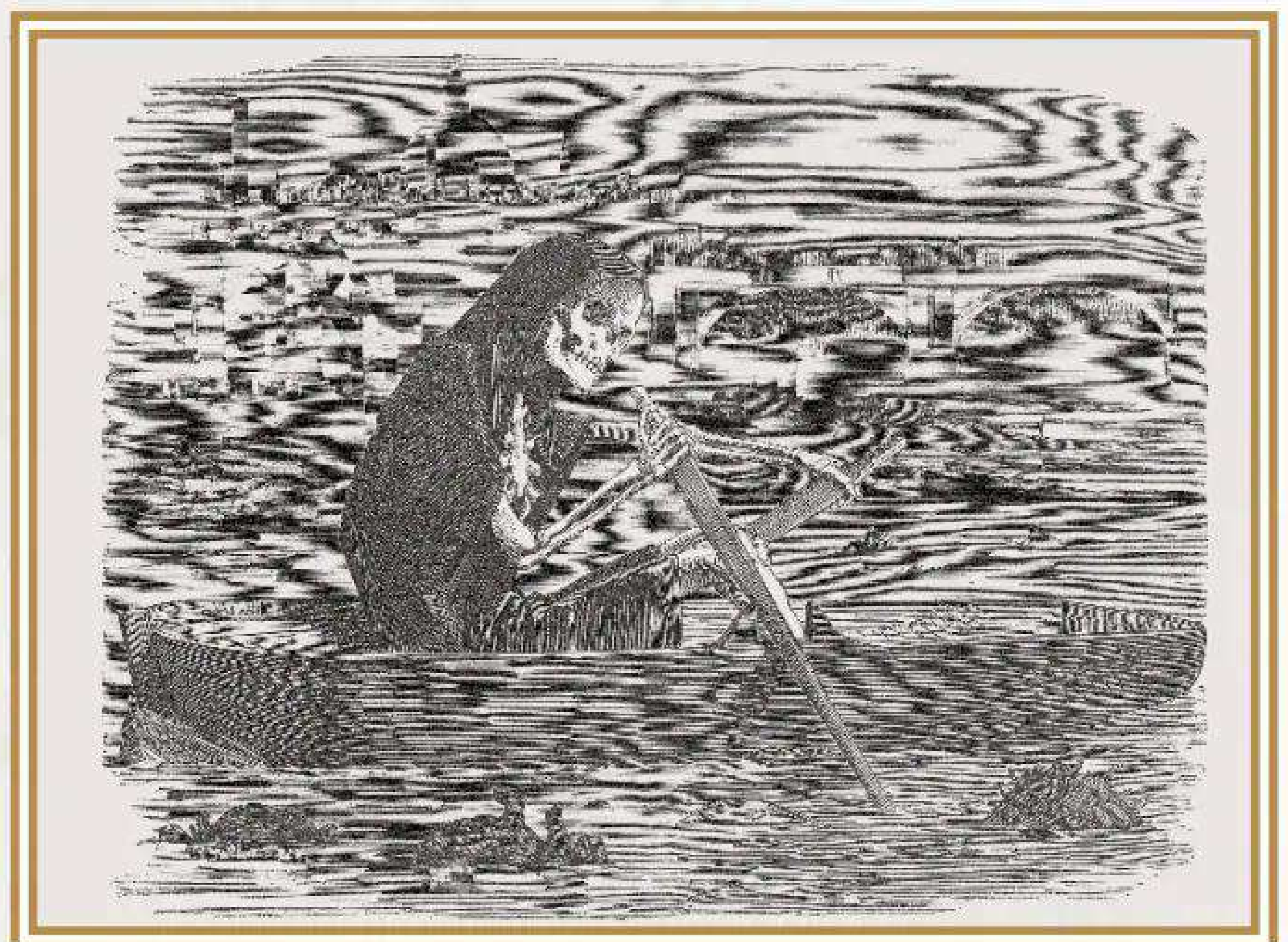


London's Northern Outfall Sewer today. Much of London's Victorian sewer system is still in use

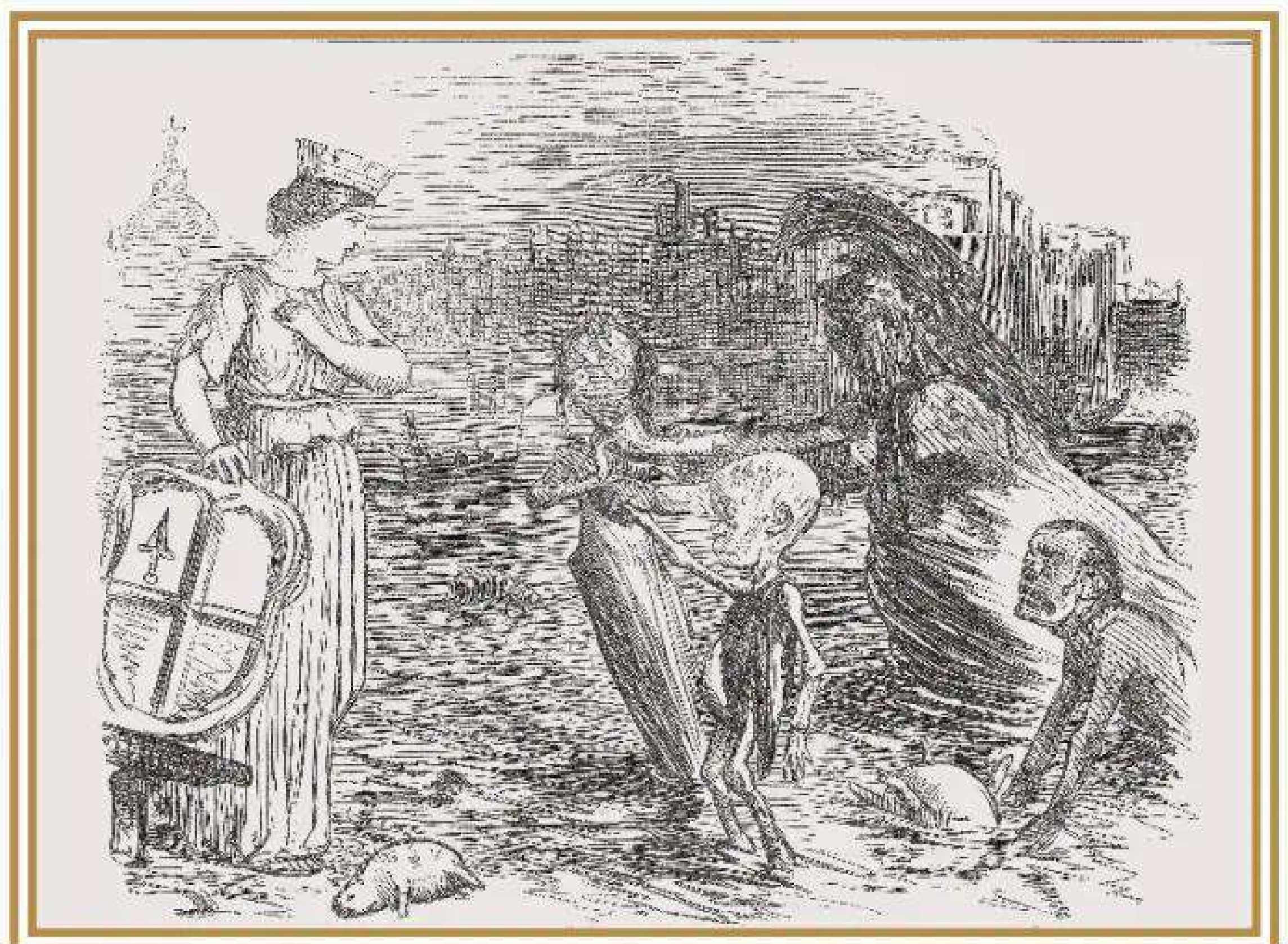
> "By the 19th century London's antiquated water supply network was regularly being tainted by the leaky and overburdened sewage overflow system"

while they had further polluted the Thames with their new-fangled flushing toilets that deluged the old and decaying sewer system, a population that had tripled in half a century, and the toxic waste byproducts of the Industrial Revolution, this was a problem that had been handed down over the preceding 500 years. Prior to the mid-13th century, Londoners had taken water for drinking and washing either from pumps or wells that tapped into aquifers underground, or directly from the freshwater tributaries that fed into the Thames – such as the Fleet river that now runs through a sewer channel beneath London's famous Fleet Street. But the water was dirty and people complained, prompting the local government to built London's first ever water system – the 'Great Conduit'. This was a pipeline nearly three miles long that carried fresh water from a spring in the countryside into the city. It was made of hollowed-out logs and lead pipes and although some of this was replaced over the years, by the 19th century the antiquated water supply network was regularly being tainted by the leaky and overburdened sewage overflow system. Particularly the Fleet, which emptied into the Thames and was near-constantly overflowing with "sweepings from butchers stalls, dung, guts and blood" that came "tumbling down the flood," according to Jonathan Swift's 1810 poem *A Description of a City Shower*.

By the 1850s, the Thames was indeed nothing more than a vast, open sewer. The smell was so bad that popular anecdotes talk of dock workers vomiting over the sides of jetties and a suicidal woman passing out before she could throw herself into the depths. Notwithstanding the Victorian penchant for gossip and exaggeration, it was vile enough for the authorities to dump 200 tons of caustic lime into the water to disinfect and quell the overwhelming stench, which was especially rank in warmer weather. The tipping point came in the summer of 1858, when an unusually hot July baked human waste to the shoreline and turned an already reeking river into a stygian stew of sluggish filth so foul-smelling that MPs had to flee the Houses of Parliament mid-session, handkerchiefs pressed to their mouths. The politicians weren't just trying to escape with their stomach contents intact: the Victorians had a medieval understanding of disease and how it propagated. The common misconception was that this awful 'miasma' caused the cholera epidemics of previous decades in which tens of thousands of Londoners had died – despite doctor John Snow's 1849 paper proposing that the disease was water-borne. So prime minister Benjamin Disraeli and his colleagues literally thought they were running from the building for their lives. However, there was an upside to this – now that the most powerful men in the country felt personally threatened by the mere whiff of pollution from the Thames, its cleanup became the highest priority in the land. Legislation was pushed through on 15 July 1858 and a sum of £3 million (over £100 million today) was committed to solving this problem. But how?



Another *Punch* cartoon that satires the polluted state of the Thames, this one published in 1858 days before prime minister Disraeli issue a bill to clean the river up

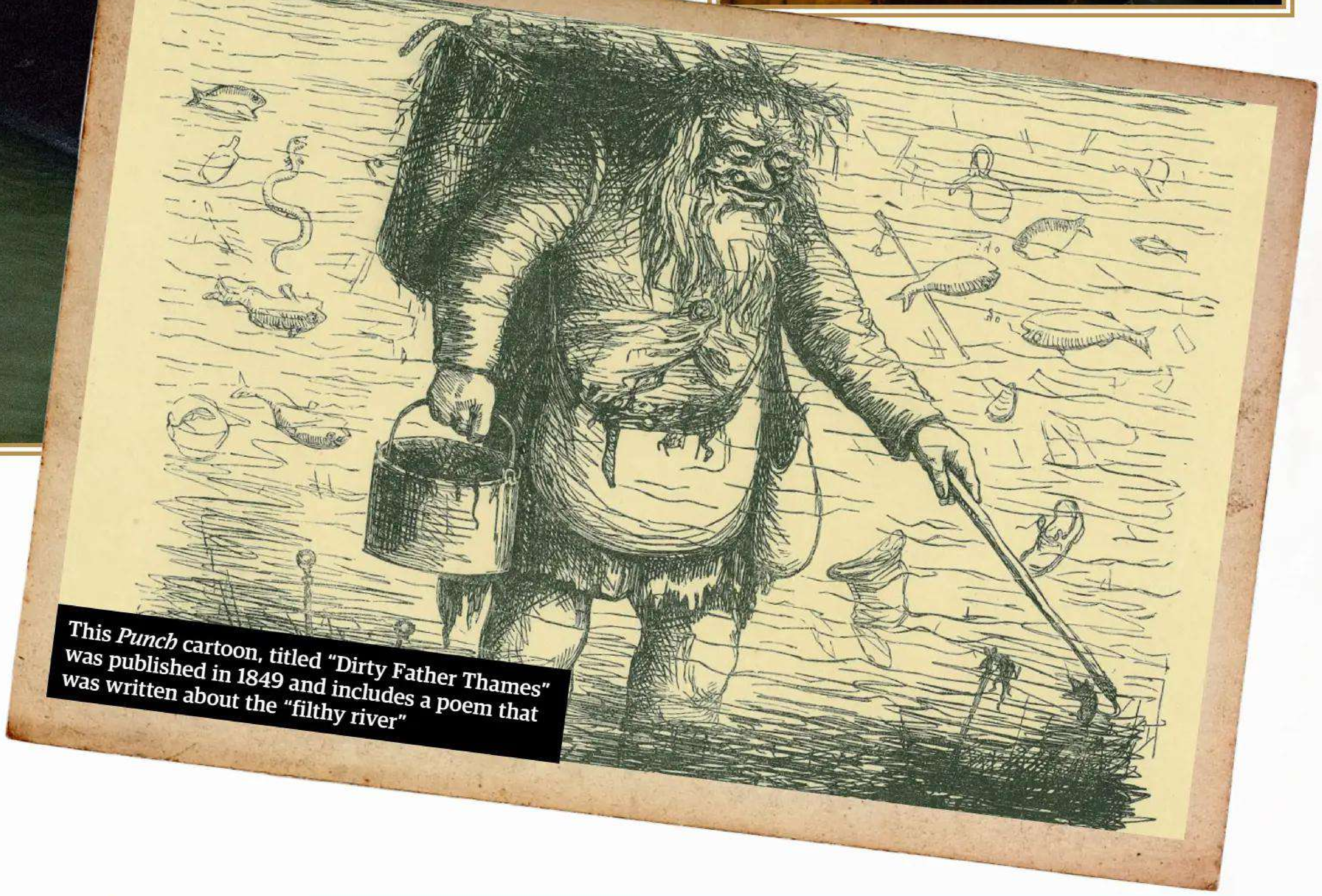


This cartoon depicts Father Thames introducing his children (Diptheria, Scrofula and Cholera) to a disgusted London, represented like Britannia as a goddess

Thames Water cleaning teams inspects the Victorian brickwork of the Fleet river's storm sewer, that runs under central London

Enter Joseph Bazalgette, a young surveyor with a reputation as a workaholic who had quickly risen to the position of chief engineer of the recently established Metropolitan Commission of Sewers. For the best part of the 1850s, he had been working on a plan to build over a thousand miles of small street sewers that fed into nearly 100 miles of main sewers, with pumping stations and outfalls that discharged sewage to the east, farther downstream of the city. It was an ambitious, expensive and highly sophisticated feat of engineering rife with its own subsets of problems. Bazalgette had tried and failed, amended and failed to get his plan approved for the best part of the decade. It was only after a change in government and the Great Stink of 1858, that Bazalgette's 1856 proposal was finally rubber-stamped by government.

The works were completed over the next two decades and ran considerably over Bazalgette's initial estimated budget of £2.4 million. Despite the expense and time taken, his efforts were lauded in the press and parliament as the 'miasma' cleared from the Thames. London's last cholera outbreak occurred in 1866, which only vindicated Bazalgette's work as almost all of the 5,596 people who died lived in an area that hadn't been connected to the new sewer network. Most of this is still being used today, supporting more than twice the population of Bazalgette's upper estimate – quite the testament to the engineer's vision. Some of the pumping stations have even become listed buildings. And to this day, there has been no repeat of the Great Stink of 1858.



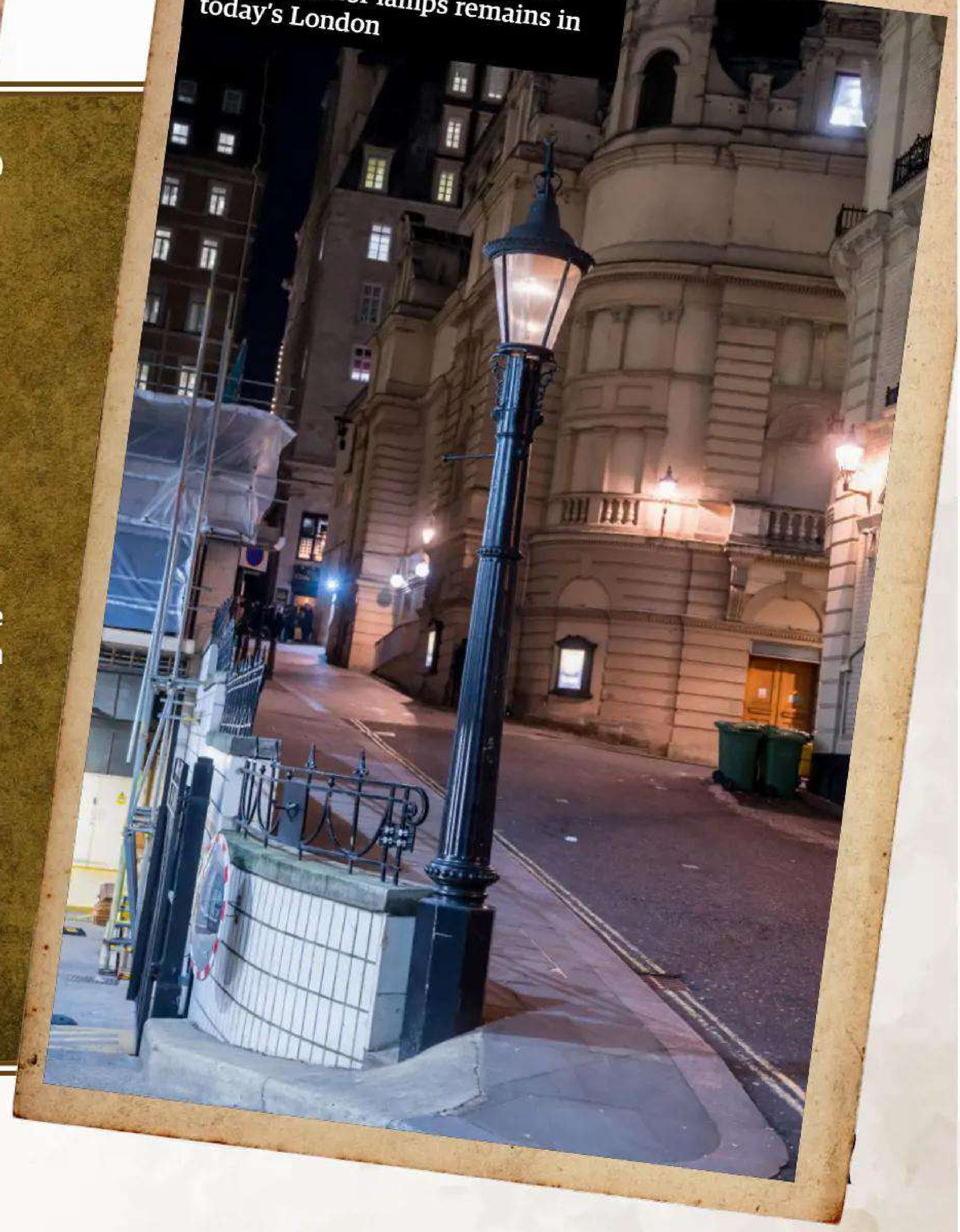
This *Punch* cartoon, titled "Dirty Father Thames" was published in 1849 and includes a poem that was written about the "filthy river"

© Getty; Alamy

FARTING LANE'S SEWER GAS LAMP

How one engineer worked out how to vent off dangerous sewer gases while providing the iconic lamplight of Victorian London

Building a complex sewer network beneath the streets of London might have solved one problem, but also it created another. In the poorly ventilated tunnels, biogases built up as a result of anaerobic digestion. Carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulphide are deadly in high concentrations, but by far the biggest threat to Bazalgette's freshly minted feat of engineering was methane: large volumes of this gas can explode with little more than a static electric spark. The problem was more pronounced on hills, where the methane would rise from the tunnels below. The most obvious solution was to drill holes into the sewer at key stagnation points and vent the gases into the street, dispersing the gases above the heads of pedestrians – although, a change in the wind could still stink the street out. It took the brainchild of another engineer, Joseph Edmund Webb, to completely solve this problem. Webb invented the "sewer gas destructor lamp", a street lamp that drew the biogases up from the sewer and burnt them off with a flame, destroying the explosive and smelly gases while lighting the street at the same time. There wasn't enough sewer gas to maintain a constant flame alone, so the sewer gas lamps relied on standard street lamp gas to keep it burning. But installed at the tops of hills, these lamps could safely vent three quarters of a mile of sewer. These lamps eventually fell into disuse as vents were installed at the tops of buildings and today, only one sewer gas destructor lamp remains in London: a replica on Carting Lane, which is affectionately known as "Farting Lane".



Only one of the original sewer gas destructor lamps remains in today's London

ENTRY TO THE TRAITORS' GATE

DARK SECRETS OF THE TOWER

The Tower of London has been subjected to centuries of royal intrigue, with many of Britain's kings and queens helping shape its shady reputation…

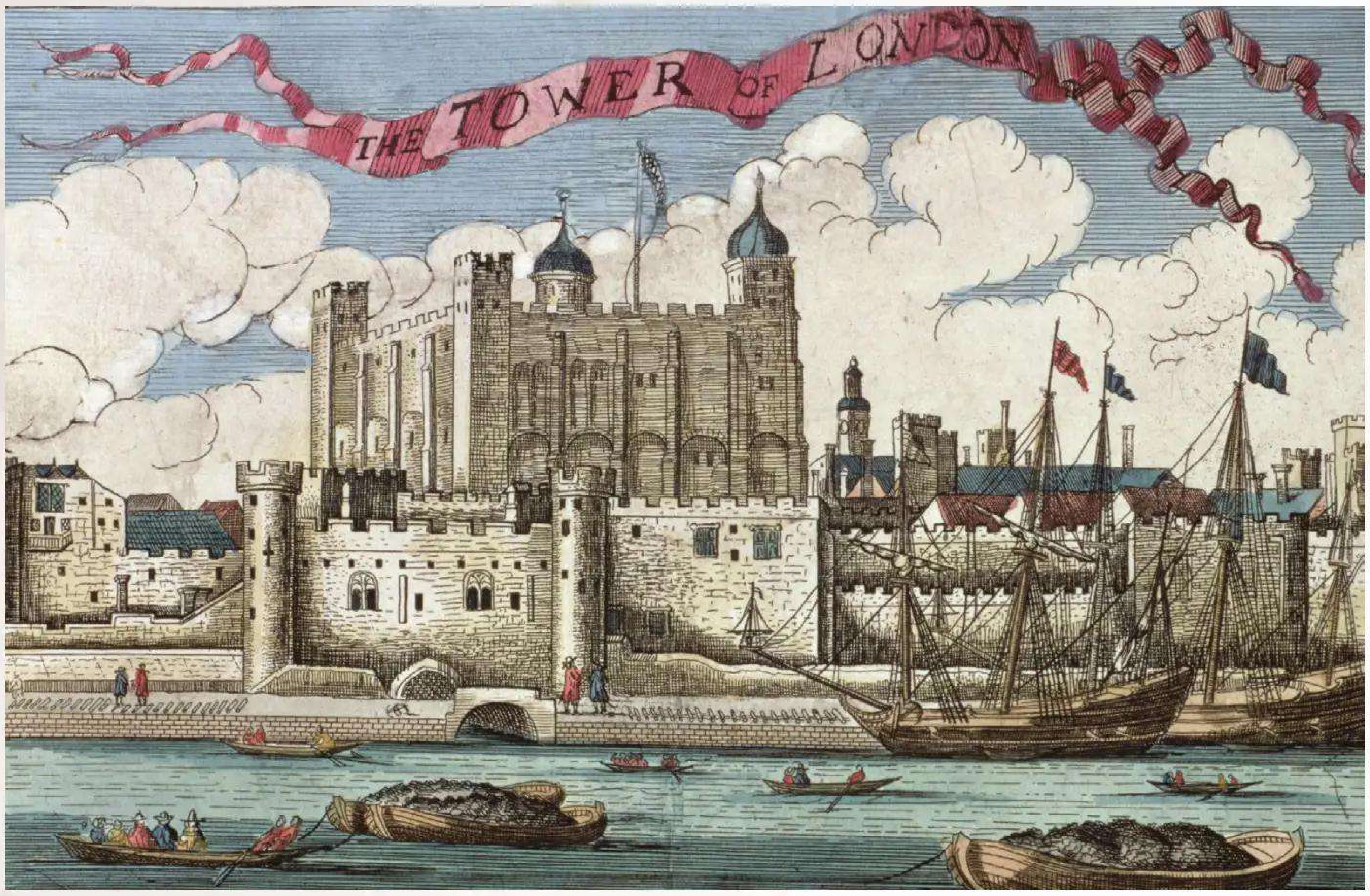
For centuries, London has thrived as the capital of England and then Britain. As the city prospered, both economically and culturally, those in power sought to display their wealth, with castles, palaces and cathedrals coming to dominate the glorious skyline. Yet underneath the mask of its civilisation lay a feral core, and the Tower of London has been home to the darkest side of the city.

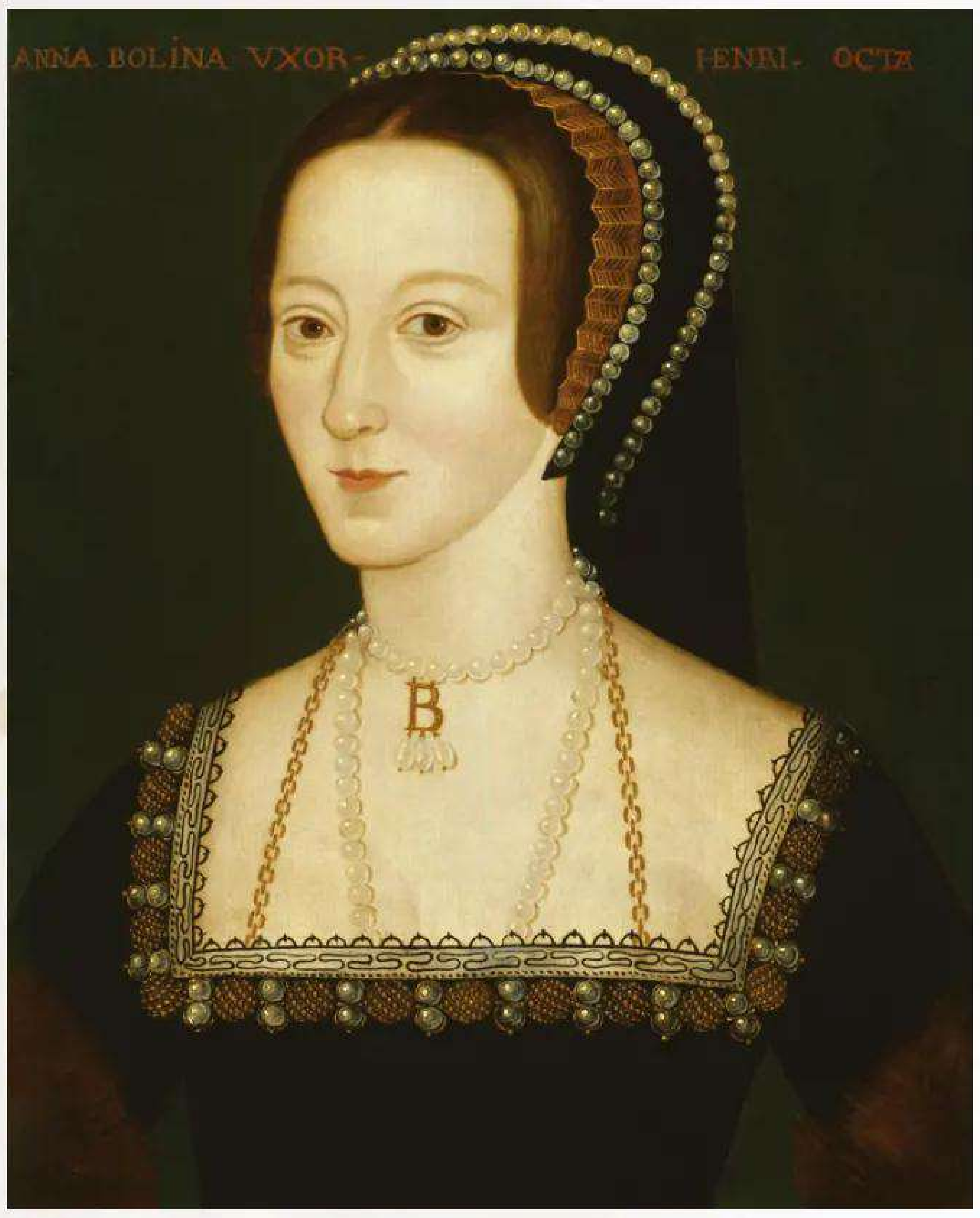
When you think of the Tower of London, the first events to spring to mind are probably the murders, imprisonments and terrible tortures that have taken place over the centuries. But before its grim history, the tower served as a royal residence to some of England's early-medieval kings. Having started life as a royal residence, the role of the Tower of London fell into constant flux, having been a home, a fortress, a menagerie, a treasury and most notoriously - and consistently - a prison. By 1100, it had been discovered that the Tower was as good at keeping people in as it was at keeping them out, and from the 12th century to 1952, it was used as a prison.

Prince and pauper alike have been imprisoned at the Tower. One of the most famous, Princess Elizabeth (later Queen Elizabeth I) was imprisoned and interrogated for her alleged involvement in the Wyatt Rebellion against Queen Mary in 1554. Her cool head and sharp wit ensured she was one of the few royals to leave the Tower with her freedom, her neck and her life.

The Tower of London stopped being a prison in 1952 with the imprisonment of the notorious Kray twins. Held in the Tower for their foiled attempt to evade military service, Ronnie and Reggie were later released, soon to embark on their infamous criminal careers.

"The Tower of London has been home to the darkest side of the city

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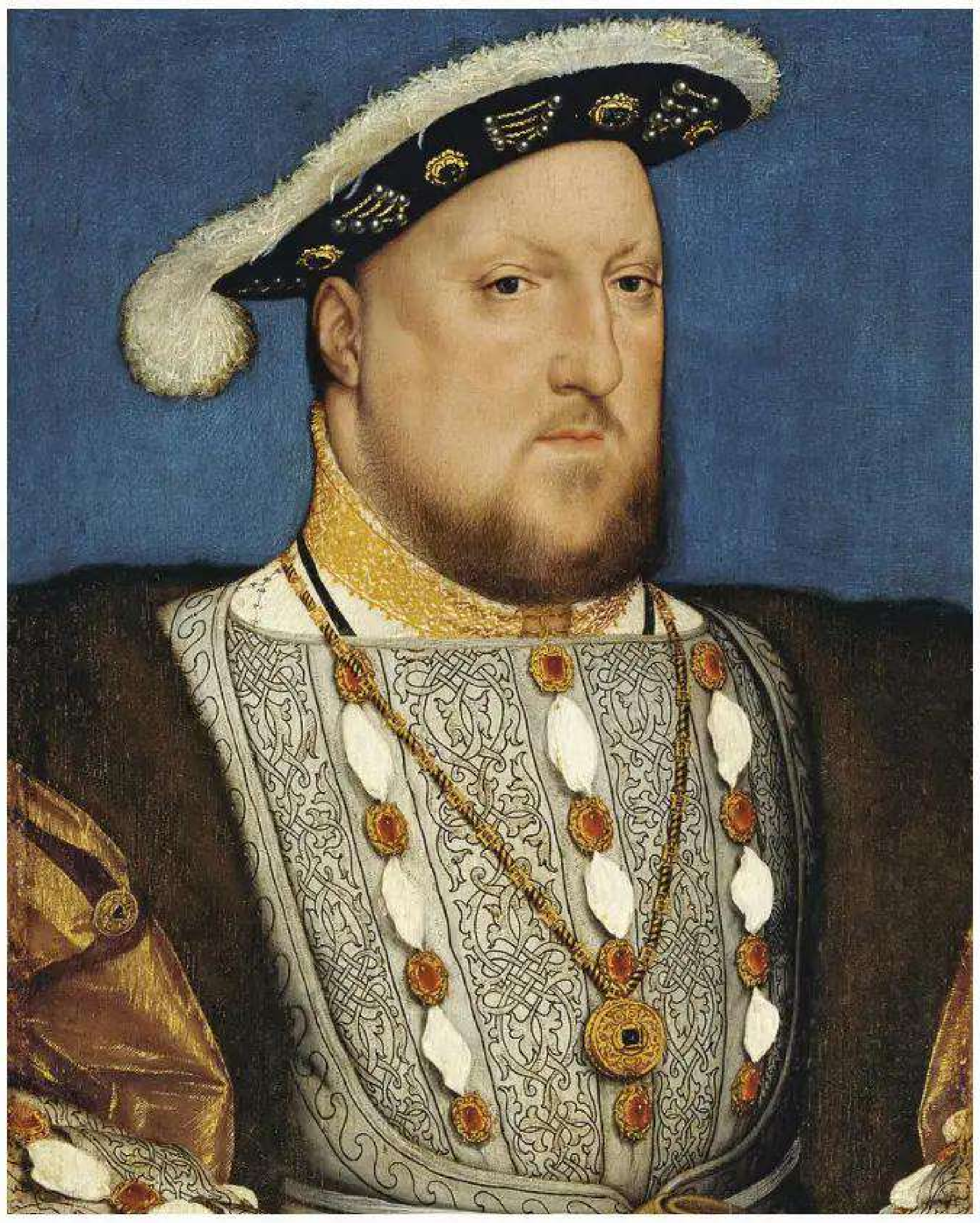
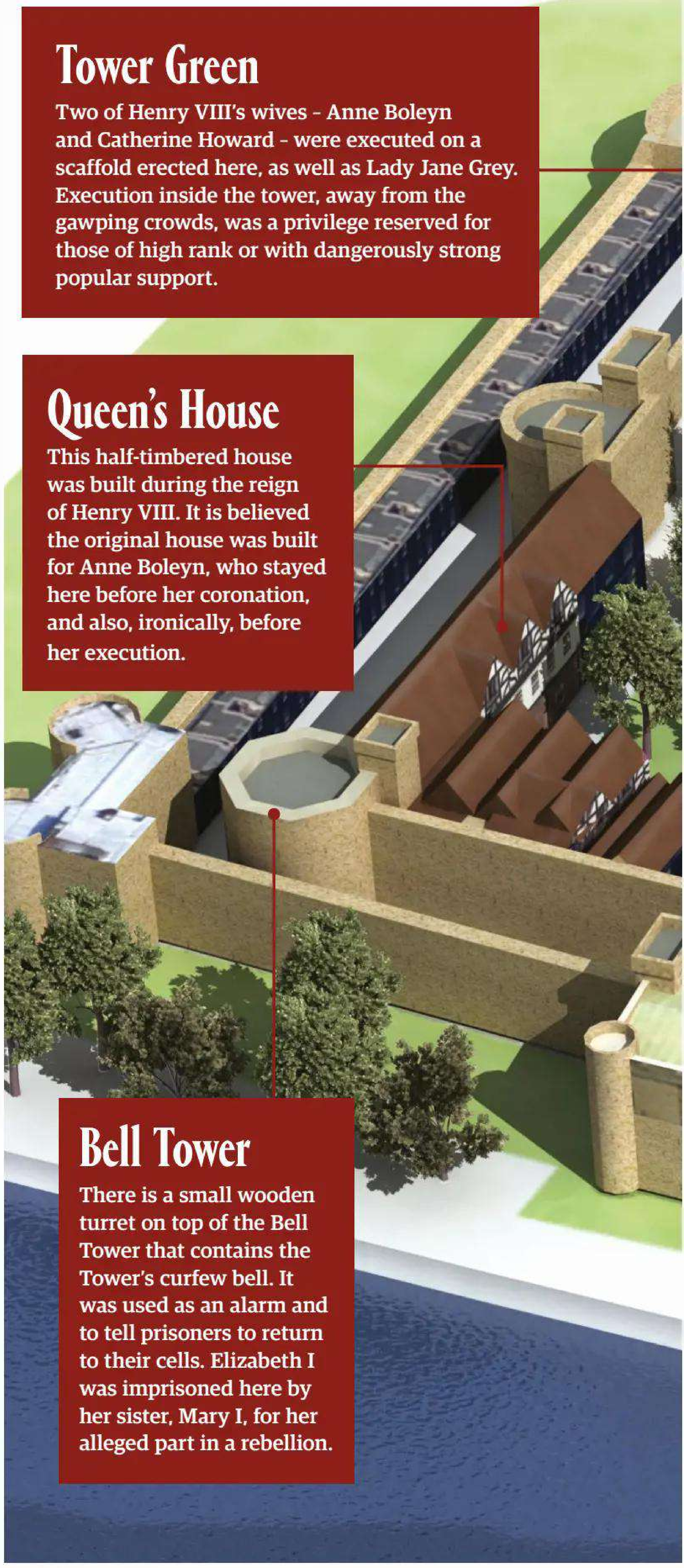




Tower Green

Two of Henry VIII's wives – Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard – were executed on a scaffold erected here, as well as Lady Jane Grey. Execution inside the tower, away from the gawping crowds, was a privilege reserved for those of high rank or with dangerously strong popular support.

Queen's House

This half-timbered house was built during the reign of Henry VIII. It is believed the original house was built for Anne Boleyn, who stayed here before her coronation, and also, ironically, before her execution.

Bell Tower

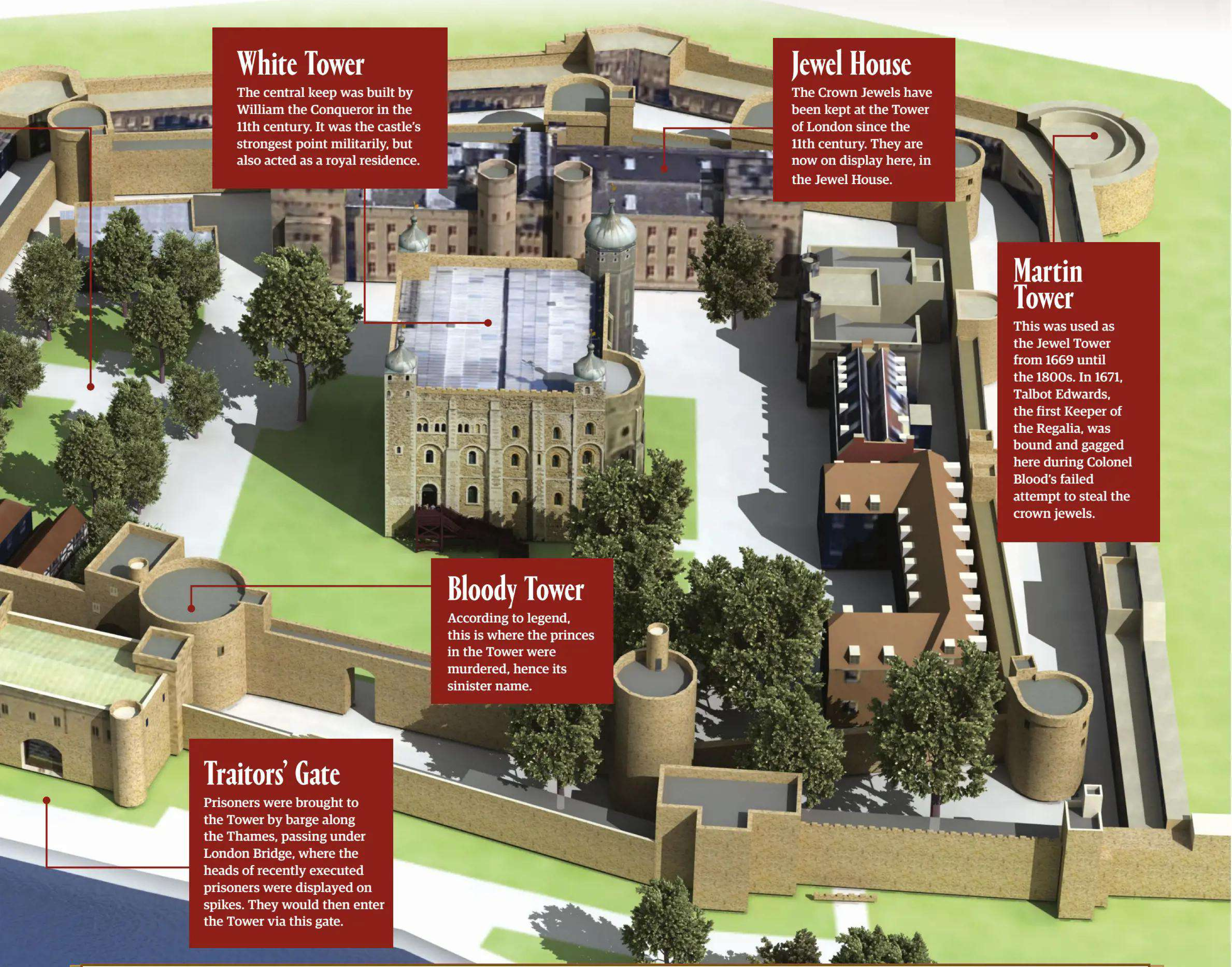
There is a small wooden turret on top of the Bell Tower that contains the Tower's curfew bell. It was used as an alarm and to tell prisoners to return to their cells. Elizabeth I was imprisoned here by her sister, Mary I, for her alleged part in a rebellion.

> "Torture was a popular means of extracting information from prisoners, and the act was performed with great zeal"

Not all prisoners were lucky enough to leave the Tower, however. Executions were commonplace, with public executions taking place on Tower Hill, while private and aristocratic executions were performed on the Green. Anne Boleyn's was probably the most famous execution at the Tower, but a long ream of other well-known figures lost their heads, including Lady Jane Grey, Sir Thomas More, Catherine Howard and James Scott (King Charles II's illegitimate son). Even into the 20th century, executions continued. German spies and soldiers during both WWI and WWII were killed by means of firing squad at the Tower.

The Tower is well known for its place in much of the history of England's royalty, including the disappearance of two young princes, Edward V of England and Richard of Shrewsbury, Duke of York. Sent to the Tower by their uncle, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, the boys were the sons of the late Edward IV. The eldest, 12-year-old Edward, was crowned king, with Richard named protector. But Richard, Duke of Gloucester made claims of illegitimacy against the princes as their father had been betrothed to another woman before he married their mother, Elizabeth Woodville. The boys were taken to live in the Tower and were never seen again.

The Tower of London has been used for even more sinister acts than this. Torture was a popular means of extracting information from prisoners, and the act was performed with great zeal. Guy Fawkes was brought to the Tower in 1605 and was tortured on the rack for his involvement in the Gunpowder Plot. Other means of torture were the manacles and the 'scavenger's daughter', which slowly contorted and crushed the human body.



White Tower

The central keep was built by William the Conqueror in the 11th century. It was the castle's strongest point militarily, but also acted as a royal residence.

Jewel House

The Crown Jewels have been kept at the Tower of London since the 11th century. They are now on display here, in the Jewel House.

Martin Tower

This was used as the Jewel Tower from 1669 until the 1800s. In 1671, Talbot Edwards, the first Keeper of the Regalia, was bound and gagged here during Colonel Blood's failed attempt to steal the crown jewels.

Bloody Tower

According to legend, this is where the princes in the Tower were murdered, hence its sinister name.

Traitors' Gate

Prisoners were brought to the Tower by barge along the Thames, passing under London Bridge, where the heads of recently executed prisoners were displayed on spikes. They would then enter the Tower via this gate.

THE PARANORMAL PRISON

The Tower has subjected many of its prisoners to more than a life sentence

Tradition and superstition still rules this medieval fortress with the iconic Yeoman Warders, aka Beefeaters, patrolling the grounds decked in red Tudor uniforms and a flock of clipped-wing resident ravens acting as the guardians of the Tower – according to 17th-century belief, should they leave, both Tower and state will fall.

The Tower of London is also thought to be the most haunted place in Britain, with spirits of the executed roaming the grounds, seeking justice for the cruelty that they had to endure at the hands of their captors.

The ghost of 16th-century noblewoman, Lady Arabella Stuart, roams the corridors of the most haunted part of the Tower, the Queen's House. Headless Anne Boleyn wanders corridors or leads a procession down the chapel aisle to her burial site. Henry VI, stabbed while praying, appears in the Wakefield Tower at the last stroke of midnight. Teenage Lady Jane Grey roams the battlements, and Guy Fawkes howls in the Council Chamber. Edward V and his brother Richard appear in nightshirts clutching each other in the White Tower, also haunted by the wispy, unidentified White Lady, whose stench of cheap perfume has been said to make visitors sick.

Along with its ghosts, the Tower also houses the Crown Jewels. Set in the crown of Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother, is one of the largest cut diamonds in the world – the legendary Koh-i-Noor. First documented in the 14th century and originating in India, the diamond passed through the hands of numerous kings, queens and emperors across numerous continents before landing in the lap of Queen Victoria. However, the diamond is tarnished by a curse that only befalls its male keepers. Legend has it, the diamond is jinxed by a Hindu text that states that any men who wear the diamond will suffer misfortune or death – only God or women can wear the jewel unscathed. History supports the theory, with many of its male owners' empires ending in ruin and the curse only seemingly being quelled since it has been worn exclusively by the female members of the British royal family.

But it's not just within the Tower's walls that hexes run amok. Centuries of violence seems to have seeped into the soil on which it stands. The surrounding area, known for its debauchery and squalor, was the hunting ground of Jack the Ripper and a regular haunt of numerous ghosts.

HENRY VIII'S TOWER OF TERROR

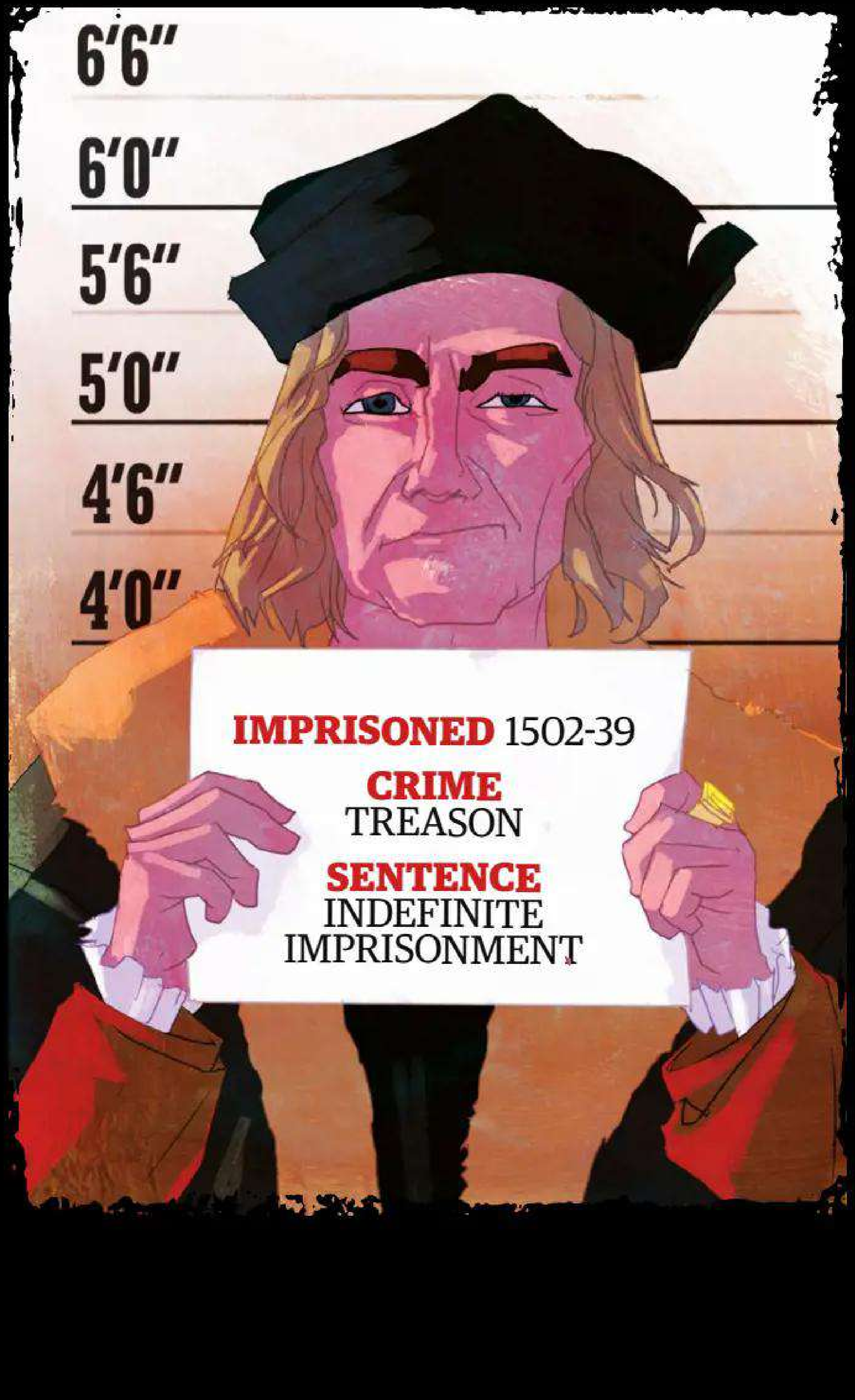
The turbulent reign of Henry VIII saw many men, women and children imprisoned at his majesty's pleasure – and not all escaped with their lives

The Tower of London has a dark legend attached to it – a grim tale of imprisonment, execution and torture. The Tower's forbidding reputation was born in the reign of Henry VIII, a period of unrivalled religious upheaval, bloodshed and rebellion when more than 100 of Henry's subjects found themselves incarcerated within the Tower's walls.

No end date was set for imprisonment in this time – prisoners were held as long as the King wished to keep them, in some cases for decades. Their departure from imprisonment might be heralded by word of royal pardon, or simply by a gruff exhortation to prepare themselves for imminent execution.

Many of Henry's prisoners are familiar to us. Most have heard of Thomas More, and of Henry's executed queens Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard. But what of the other men and women who found themselves imprisoned in this foreboding fortress? As Henry's reign progressed, prisoner numbers rose to an almost unmanageable level. Treason, heresy and political discord meant noble and commoner alike found themselves incarcerated here, facing a very uncertain future. These are the forgotten prisoners of Henry VIII.

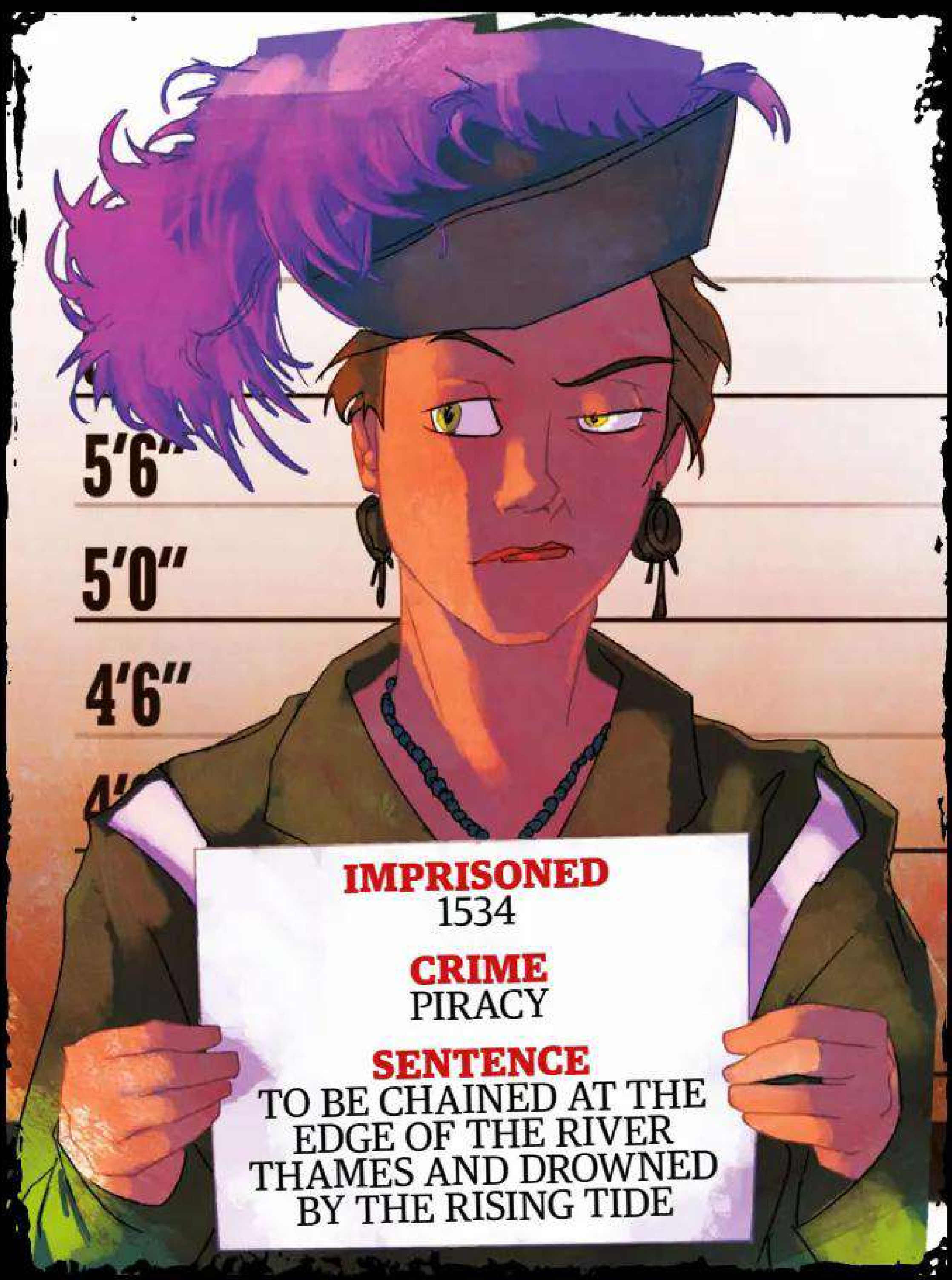
WILLIAM DE LA POLE: THREAT TO THE THRONE



William has the unhappy distinction of being the longest serving prisoner in the Tower's history. Jailed by Henry VIII's father, he remained in the Tower for the majority of Henry's reign. His crime? Yorkist blood. When the Lancastrian Henry VII emerged victorious in the Wars of the Roses – which had seen the Houses of York and Lancaster tear the country apart for 30 years – he claimed to have ended the wars. He married Elizabeth of York to reconcile their families, but he had not ended the Yorkist threat. He faced two serious invasions led by pretenders, and even at the end of his reign there were still many potential rivals for the throne. William de la Pole was one of them. As Queen Elizabeth's cousin, he shared her royal blood. But while William's brothers directly threatened the Tudor crown – fighting, plotting and claiming the throne for themselves – William was not much of a troublemaker. He was arrested in 1502 as part of a round up of de la Pole supporters and condemned as a traitor by parliament in 1504. Even after his brothers were all dead, William remained incarcerated, more because of what he represented – a figurehead for further Yorkist insurrection – than for any personal wrongdoing. He died still a prisoner of the Tower, after almost 38 years.

VISIT THE TOWER OF LONDON

You can visit the castle today – take a Yeoman Warder tour of the grounds and around its towers and chambers. See the world-famous Crown Jewels and royal armouries up close.

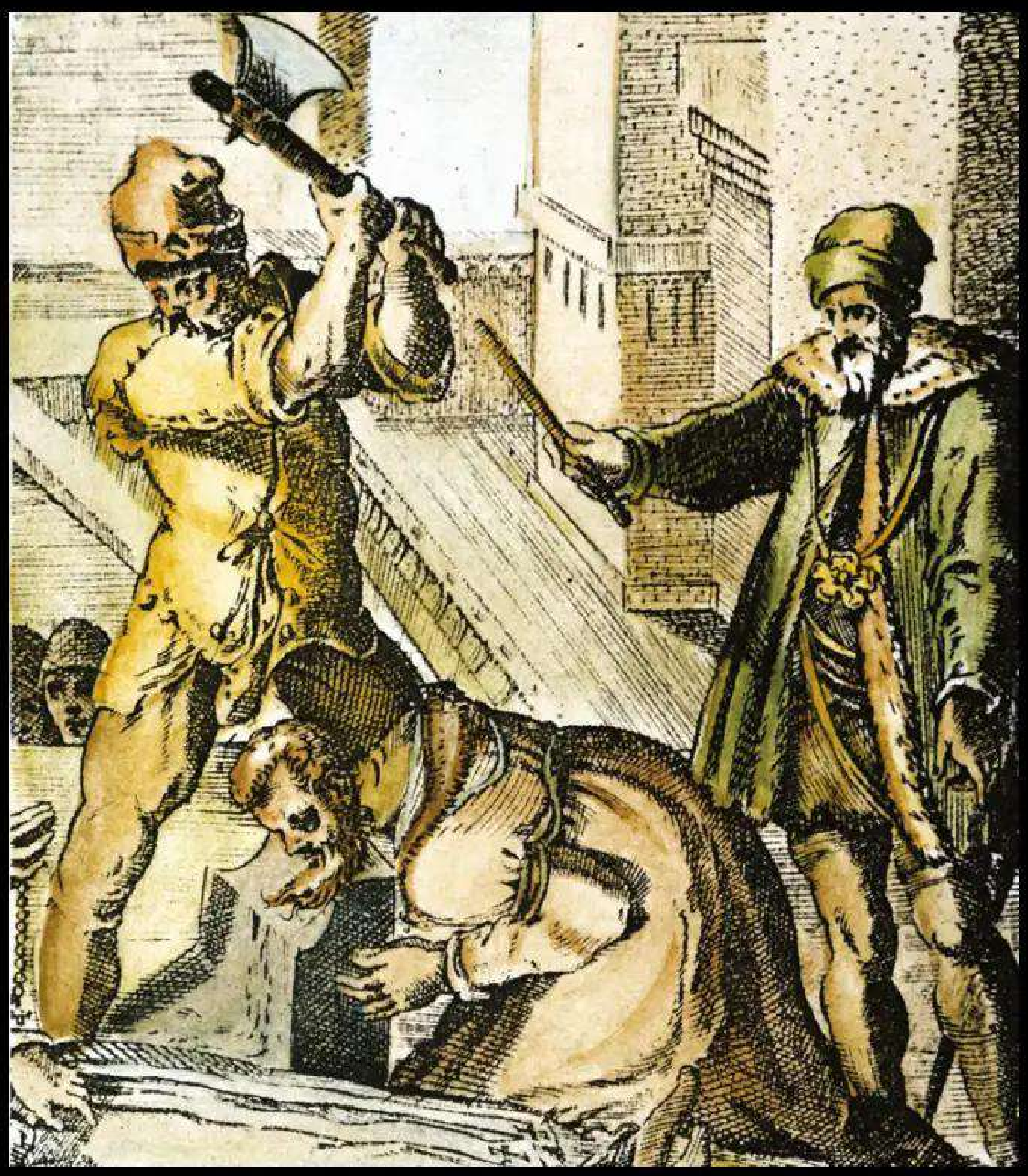

5'6"
5'0"
4'6"
IMPRISONED
1534
CRIME
PIRACY
SENTENCE
TO BE CHAINED AT THE EDGE OF THE RIVER THAMES AND DROWNED BY THE RISING TIDE

ALICE WOLF: THE ESCAPE ARTIST

We associate the Tower of London with powerful, politically sensitive prisoners, but Alice Wolf was neither. In July 1533, she and her husband John lured two foreign merchants into a boat on the Thames where they robbed and murdered them. When the bodies were discovered, Alice and John were quickly carted off to the Tower. As the Wolfs had committed their crimes on a boat, they were convicted of piracy, the penalty for which was a drawn-out death by drowning. It was an end Alice was determined not to meet.

She was kept within the Inner Ward, the most difficult part of the Tower to reach, but by remarkable good fortune, Alice's jailer was one John Bawde, a long-term associate of the Wolfs. He agreed to help Alice escape, and on 24 March 1534, everything was in place. Alice had appealed to the daughter of the lieutenant to free her from her shackles, enabling her to move freely around her cell. With her hands and feet unfettered, she shook the door to her cell open – it was only hasped with an old bit of bone. The outer door was opened with a key provided by Bawde. Then, disguised in men's clothing, Alice crept to the roof of St Thomas's Tower on the outer limits of the walls, where Bawde was waiting.

As the clock struck ten, they slid down a rope to the wharf below. From there, they boarded a little boat and rowed around to some steps outside the Tower boundaries. Freedom was in their grasp. But as Bawde and Alice walked up the hill from the river, they were spotted by two watchmen. Alice's disguise did not fool them and both prisoner and jailer were dragged back to the Tower. The unfortunate Bawde was tortured for his betrayal and then hanged. Alice and her husband were drowned in the Thames. Alice Wolf remains the only woman to have escaped the Tower of London, if only for a short while.



HENRY'S TURBULENT REIGN

Henry's reign saw nearly 40 years of political and personal highs and lows, with varying degrees of popular

PUBLIC OPINION

Accession
Henry VIII succeeds his father at 17 years old. He swiftly marries Spanish princess Catherine of Aragon and they have a joint coronation.
1509

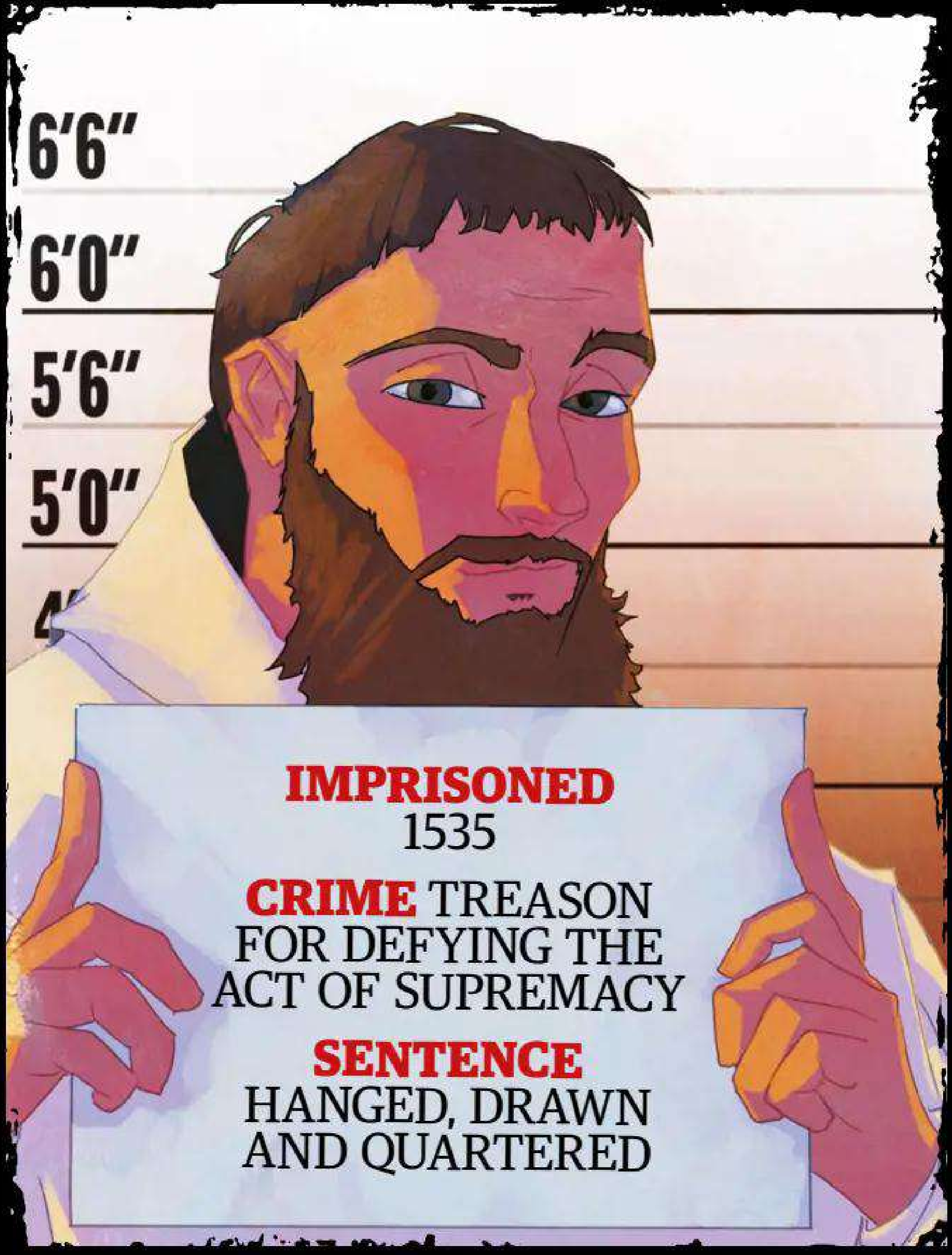
Battle of Flodden
English forces win a decisive victory over the Scots. Henry's brother-in-law James IV is killed in the battle. Henry himself is away fighting in France when the battle is won.
1513

Field of the Cloth of Gold
Henry VIII meets the French King Francis I in the Pale of Calais. Magnificent revelries ensue, celebrating 'universal peace' between the old rivals.
1520

Divorce
Henry finally succeeds in annulling his marriage to Catherine of Aragon and remarries the rather less popular Anne Boleyn.
1533

The Act of Supremacy
Henry VIII appoints himself supreme head of the Church in England. Shortly afterwards, a new Treasons Act makes it illegal to deny Henry's supremacy.
1534

Execution of Anne Boleyn
Henry's second wife Anne is executed for treason – the first time in history a queen of England is killed. Within a fortnight, Henry marries her lady-in-waiting Jane Seymour.
1536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5'6"
5'0"
IMPRISONED
1535
CRIME TREASON FOR DEFYING THE ACT OF SUPREMACY
SENTENCE
HANGED, DRAWN AND QUARTERED

SEBASTIAN NEWDIGATE: THE MEDDLING MONK

Sebastian was born to a well-connected Middlesex family and grew up at court, where he enjoyed Henry VIII's favour and was helped to a good marriage. After his wife's death, Sebastian turned to religion and entered the London Charterhouse. As a monk of the Charterhouse (a 'Carthusian'), Sebastian was at the forefront of a propaganda war against the rising tide of Protestantism in England, seizing books and exposing radical sects of heretics. When Henry VIII insisted on being acknowledged as supreme head of the Church of England, he inevitably met fierce opposition from Sebastian and his brothers. The Carthusians begrudgingly accepted Henry's divorce from his wife, but they would not deny the supremacy of the pope. Henry's attempts to force the Carthusians to accept his leadership were brutal. The prior of the London order was executed in his habit, and his arms fixed over the entrance to the Charterhouse as a warning. Still the monks held out.

Sebastian was among three Carthusians imprisoned in the Tower of London in an attempt to force their submission: for two weeks they were chained to pillars, standing in their own excrement. Allegedly the King himself visited to appeal for Newdigate to accept his supremacy, but he and his brothers would not give in.

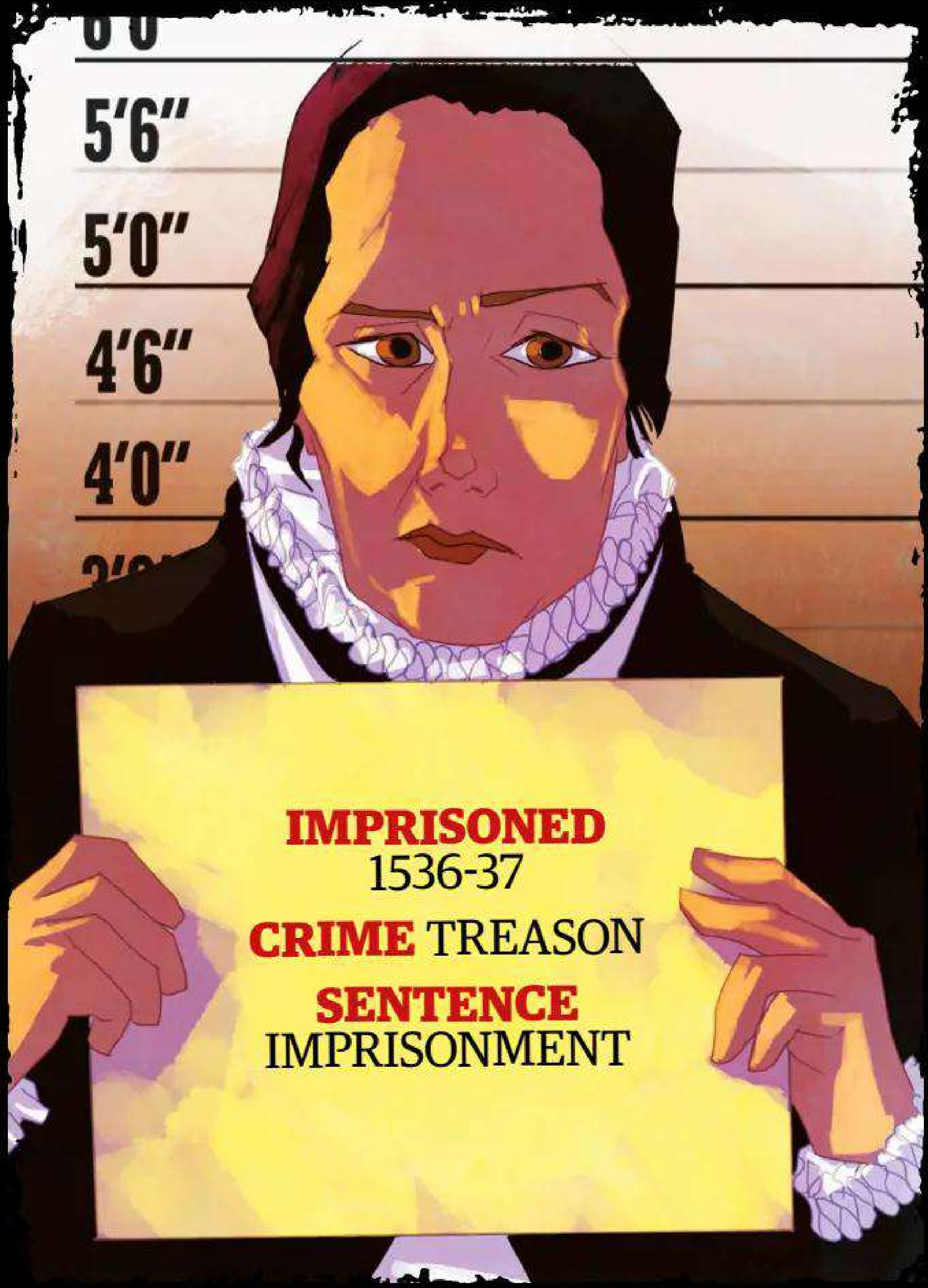
Sebastian eventually met the same fate as his prior, one of 18 Carthusian monks that were killed by King Henry. On 19 June 1535, he was dragged on a hurdle to Tyburn and there hanged and quartered.

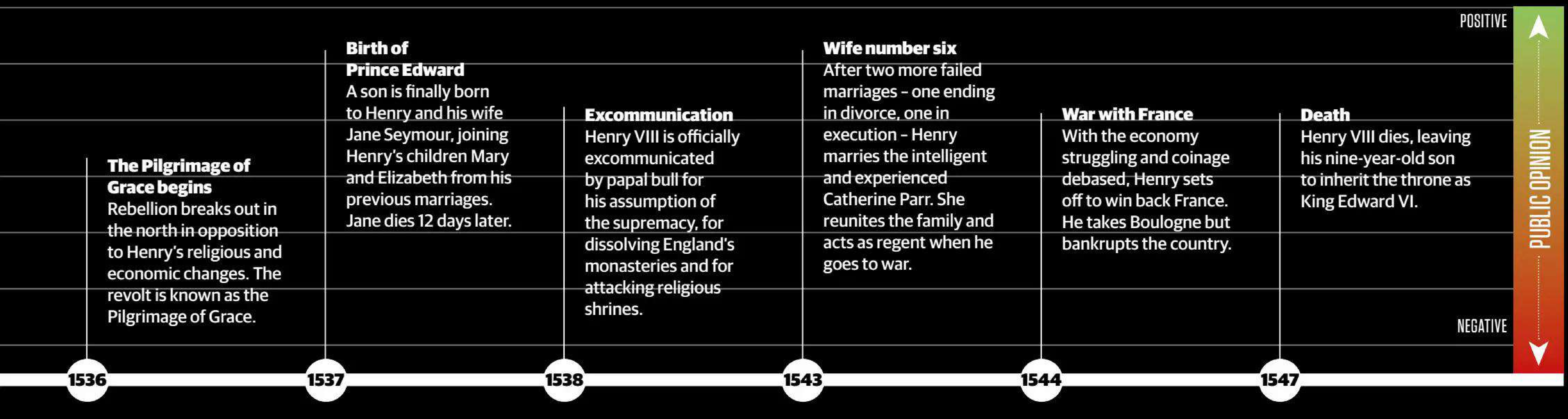
MARGARET DOUGLAS: UNLUCKY IN LOVE

Margaret's mother was Henry VIII's elder sister, the one-time queen of Scotland, but her royal blood was to prove a mixed blessing. Margaret grew up in comfort at the English court, becoming a leading light of the literary clique surrounding the new queen, Anne Boleyn. She exchanged poetry with other courtiers, notably with Anne's uncle, Thomas Howard. Their relationship developed into a serious affair with the couple meeting clandestinely in friends' chambers to exchange tokens of their love: a portrait, a ring, a diamond. Eventually, at Easter 1536, they were secretly betrothed. For members of the blood royal to get engaged without the King's permission was a misstep under any circumstances, but Margaret and Thomas's timing was catastrophic. The fall of Anne Boleyn in May 1536 left Henry with a sickly bastard son and two daughters he had declared illegitimate. Margaret was suddenly next in line to the throne. Her romantic entanglement now took on the dimension of a political coup. Henry VIII amended the law so that marrying into the blood royal without permission was treason and Margaret and Thomas were sent to the Tower. There they exchanged miserable poetry about their star-crossed love.

Although Margaret was restored to favour, Thomas died of sickness contracted in prison. It was a harsh punishment for falling in love.

"Alas! That ever prison strong
Should two such lovers separate
Yet though our bodies suffereth wrong
Our hearts should be of one estate"





The Pilgrimage of Grace begins
Rebellion breaks out in the north in opposition to Henry's religious and economic changes. The revolt is known as the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Birth of Prince Edward
A son is finally born to Henry and his wife Jane Seymour, joining Henry's children Mary and Elizabeth from his previous marriages. Jane dies 12 days later.

Excommunication
Henry VIII is officially excommunicated by papal bull for his assumption of the supremacy, for dissolving England's monasteries and for attacking religious shrines.

Wife number six
After two more failed marriages – one ending in divorce, one in execution – Henry marries the intelligent and experienced Catherine Parr. She reunites the family and acts as regent when he goes to war.

War with France
With the economy struggling and coinage debased, Henry sets off to win back France. He takes Boulogne but bankrupts the country.

Death
Henry VIII dies, leaving his nine-year-old son to inherit the throne as King Edward VI.

HOW TO GET BY IN PRISON

Tudor prisons provided very little for their inmates. Here are some tips to help make your stay as pleasant as possible

BE RICH
Unless you like sleeping on beds of straw and eating bread rolls every day, it pays to be rich in prison. Everything from fresh clothes and furniture to servants and pets can be brought into the Tower – for the right price.

BE NICE TO YOUR GUARD
Although he keeps you locked up, a guard is also your link to the outside world. From messages to food, it all comes through him. If you get on well, he might even be willing to help you escape.

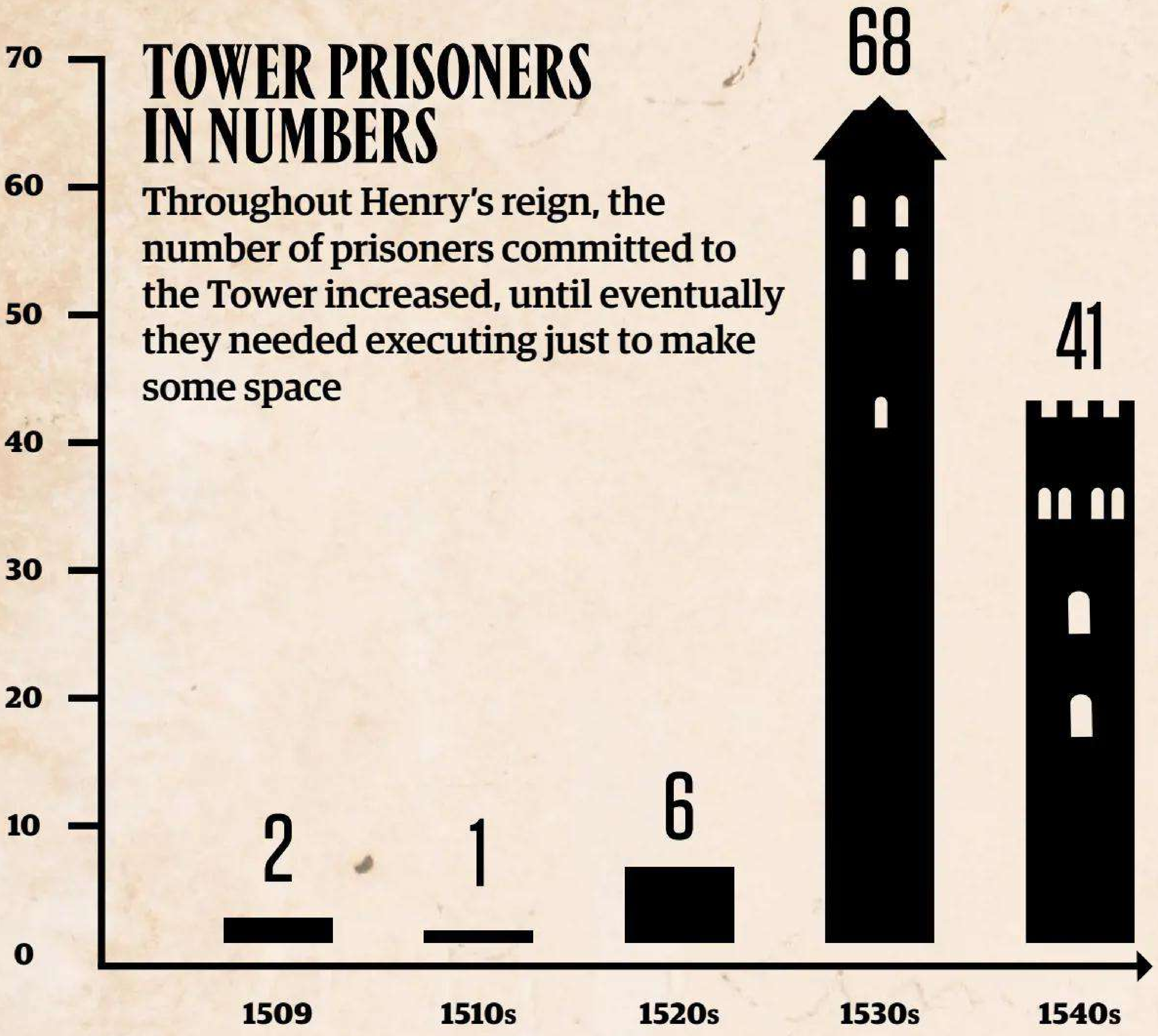
BRING SOME HOME COMFORTS
The wealthy and important are allowed to bring their servants to the Tower – and even their families should they wish. These comforts of home can make a stay much more enjoyable.

HAVE FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES
Your chances of release are much better if you have an ally who is close to the King and has a bit of influence over him. That is, as long as they don't also join you as a prisoner in the Tower of London.

CONSIDER ESCAPE
A surprising number of Tower prisoners successfully escaped – and if you get out, you can flee into exile or take sanctuary at a local church. Of course, if you are caught, it'll likely be the death penalty for you.

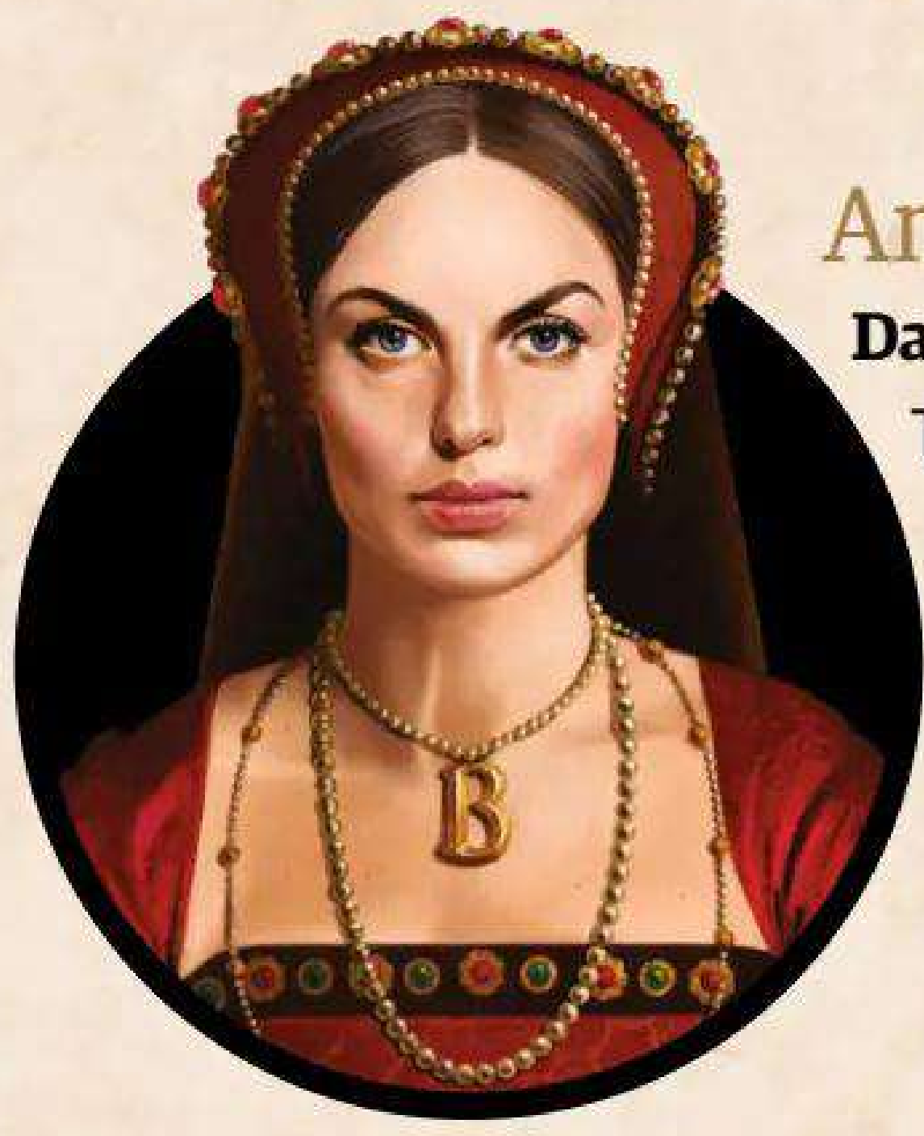
TOWER PRISONERS IN NUMBERS

Throughout Henry's reign, the number of prisoners committed to the Tower increased, until eventually they needed executing just to make some space



THE TOWER'S FIVE MOST INFAMOUS INMATES

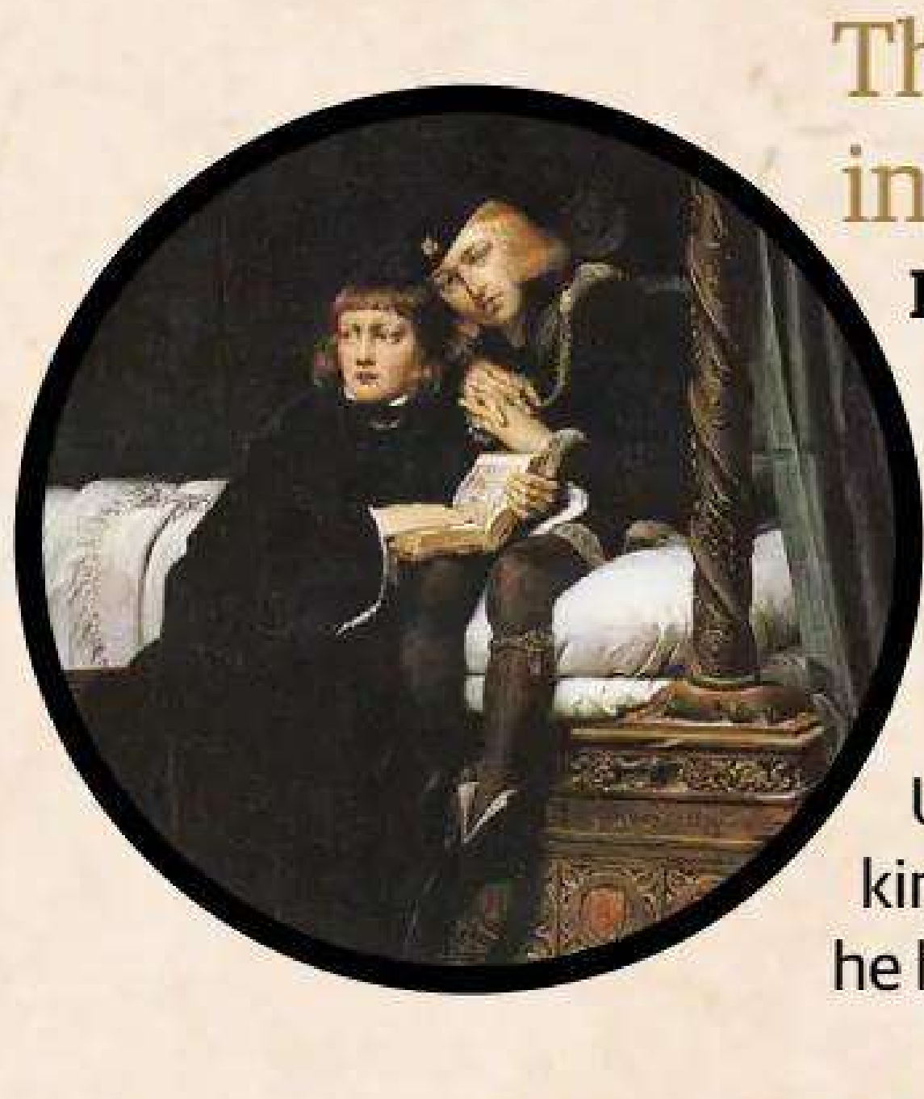
Some of the most powerful and intriguing figures in history have been imprisoned in the Tower of London



Anne Boleyn

Date of imprisonment: 1536

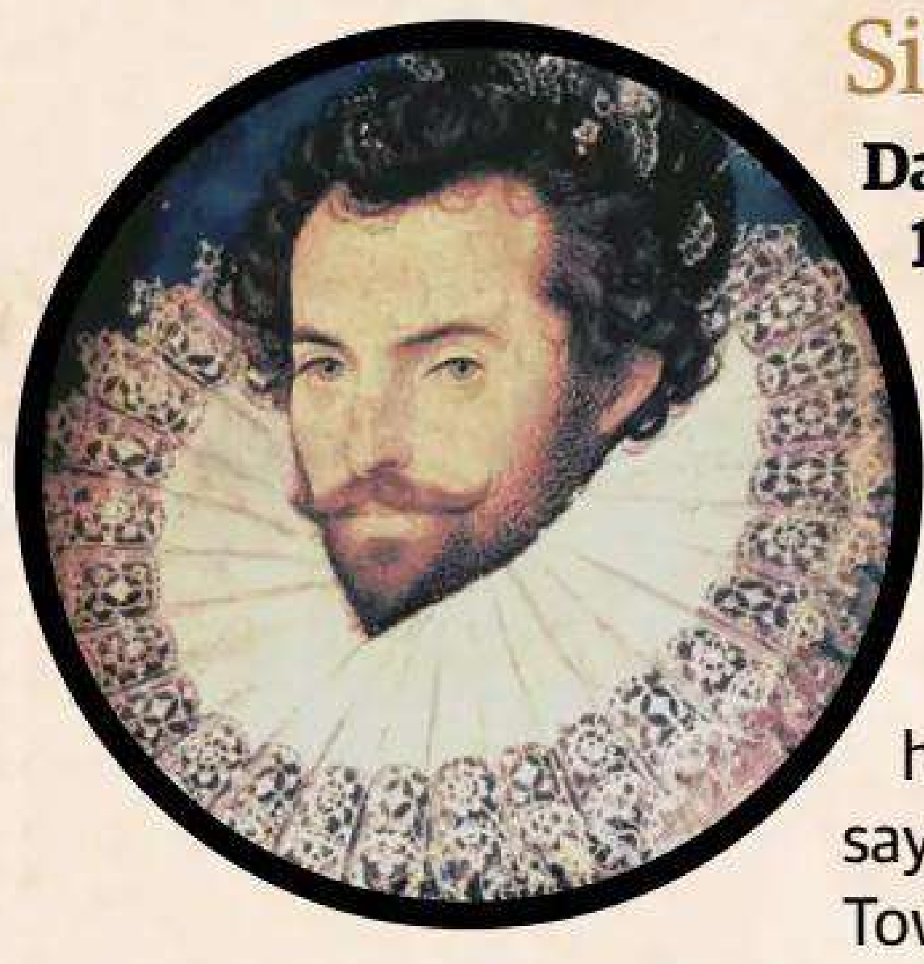
The first queen of England ever to be executed, Anne was accused of treason against her husband Henry VIII. She was beheaded on Tower Green.



The Princes in the Tower

Date of imprisonment: 1483

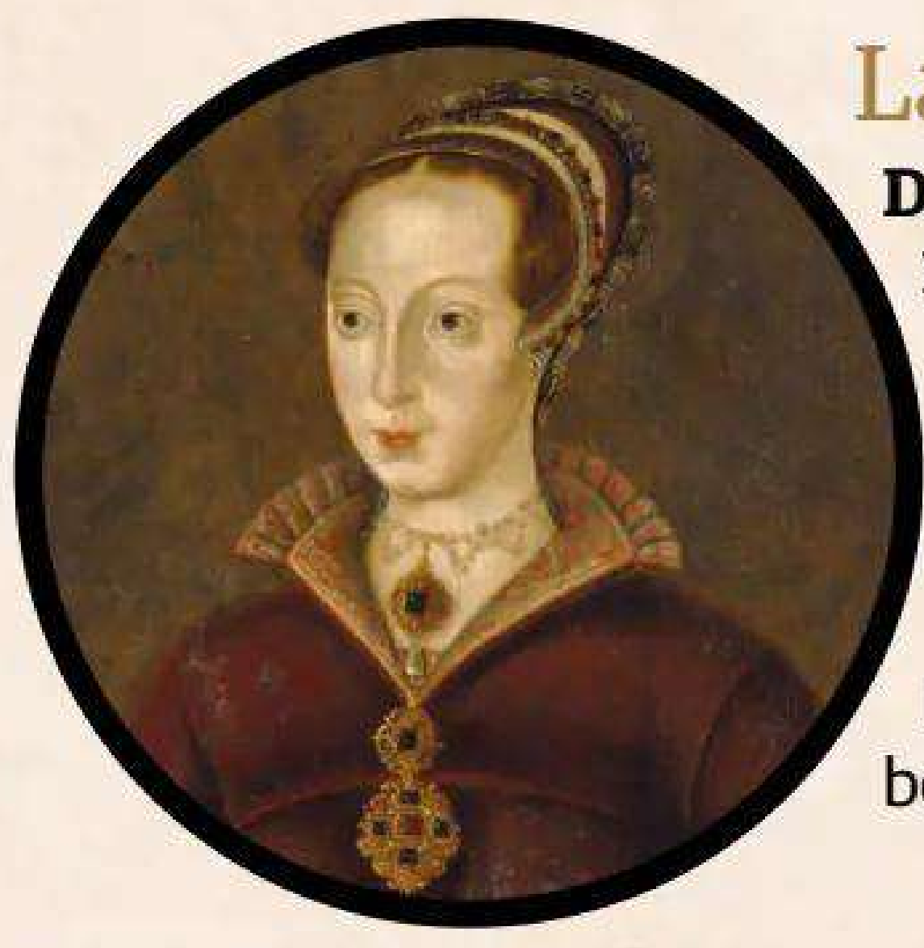
12-year-old Edward V and his brother were brought to the Tower by their uncle. Just days later, Uncle Richard was declared king and it is widely believed he had the boys put to death.



Sir Walter Raleigh

Dates of imprisonment: 1592-93, 1603-16, 1618

Walter lived in the Bloody Tower with his entire family and spent his imprisonment growing tobacco and writing a history of the world. Some say that his ghost still walks the Tower walls.



Lady Jane Grey

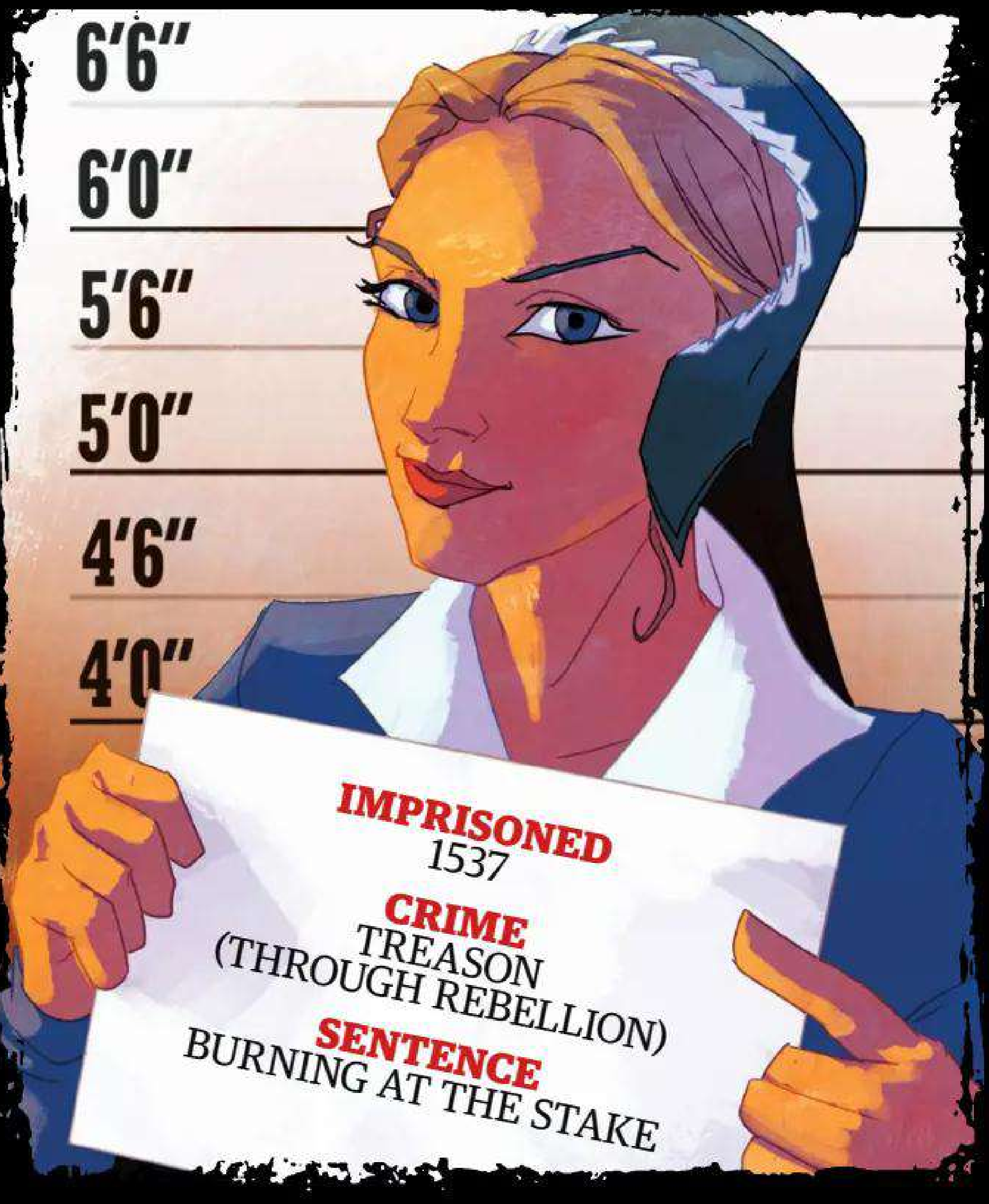
Dates of imprisonment: 1553-54

Protestant Jane inherited the throne from her cousin Edward VI but lost it to her Catholic rival Mary I. A year later, Jane was beheaded within the Tower.

Rudolf Hess

Date of imprisonment: 1941

Hitler's deputy parachuted into Britain in 1941, hoping to end the war. He was imprisoned at the Tower for a few days, the last state prisoner kept there.



MARGARET BULMER: THE RELENTLESS REBEL

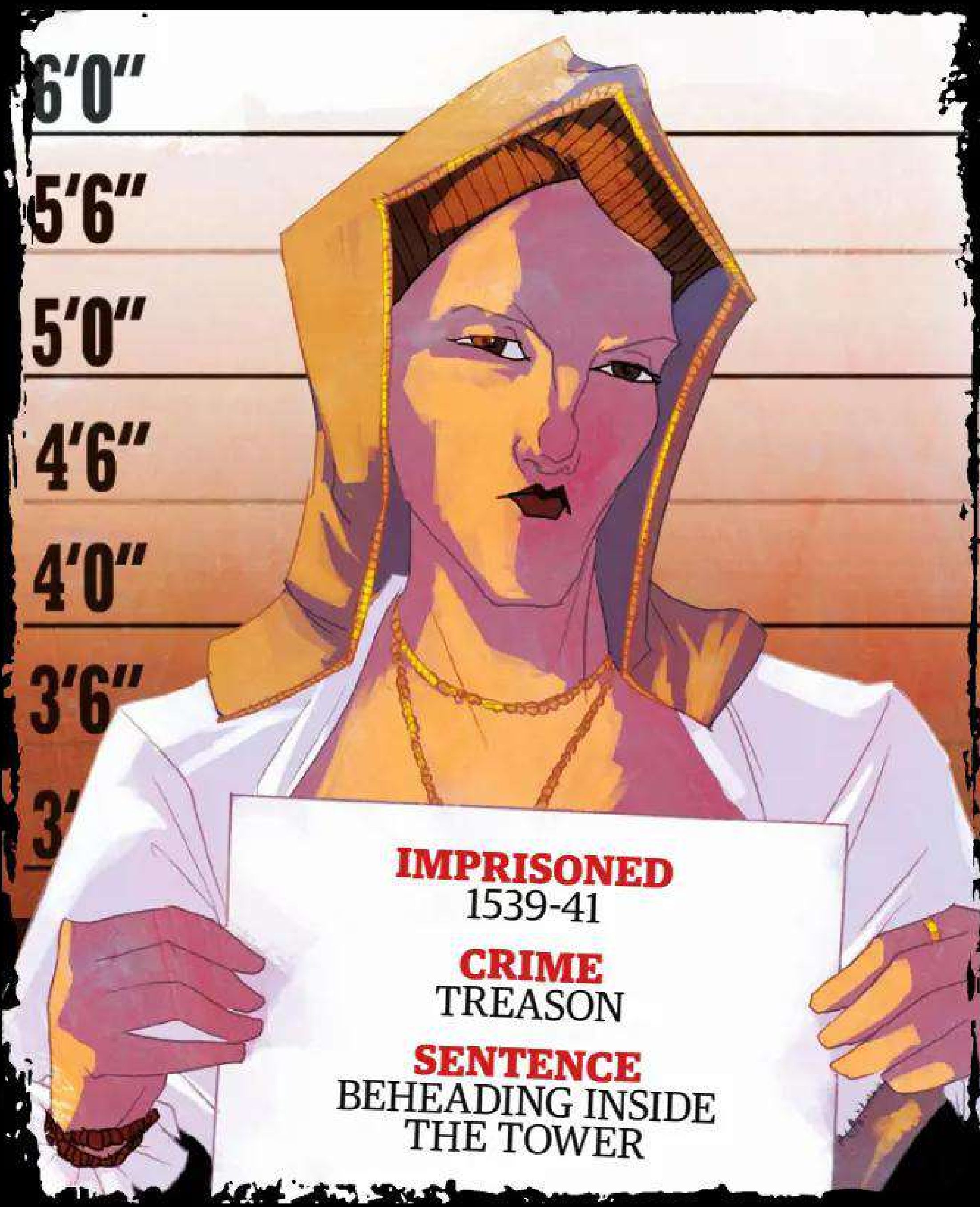
Margaret was one of among tens of thousands of people who became embroiled in the most serious rebellion of Henry VIII's reign: the Pilgrimage of Grace. Coming after years of upheaval that had seen Henry set himself up as the supreme head of the Church of England, the rebellion spread from Lincolnshire to Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cumbria. A rebel army of churchmen, commoners and gentry called for the reversal of the dissolution of the monasteries and an end to enclosure and unpopular new taxes. Despite its mass support, the rebellion was brutally defeated and more than 200 rebels were killed.

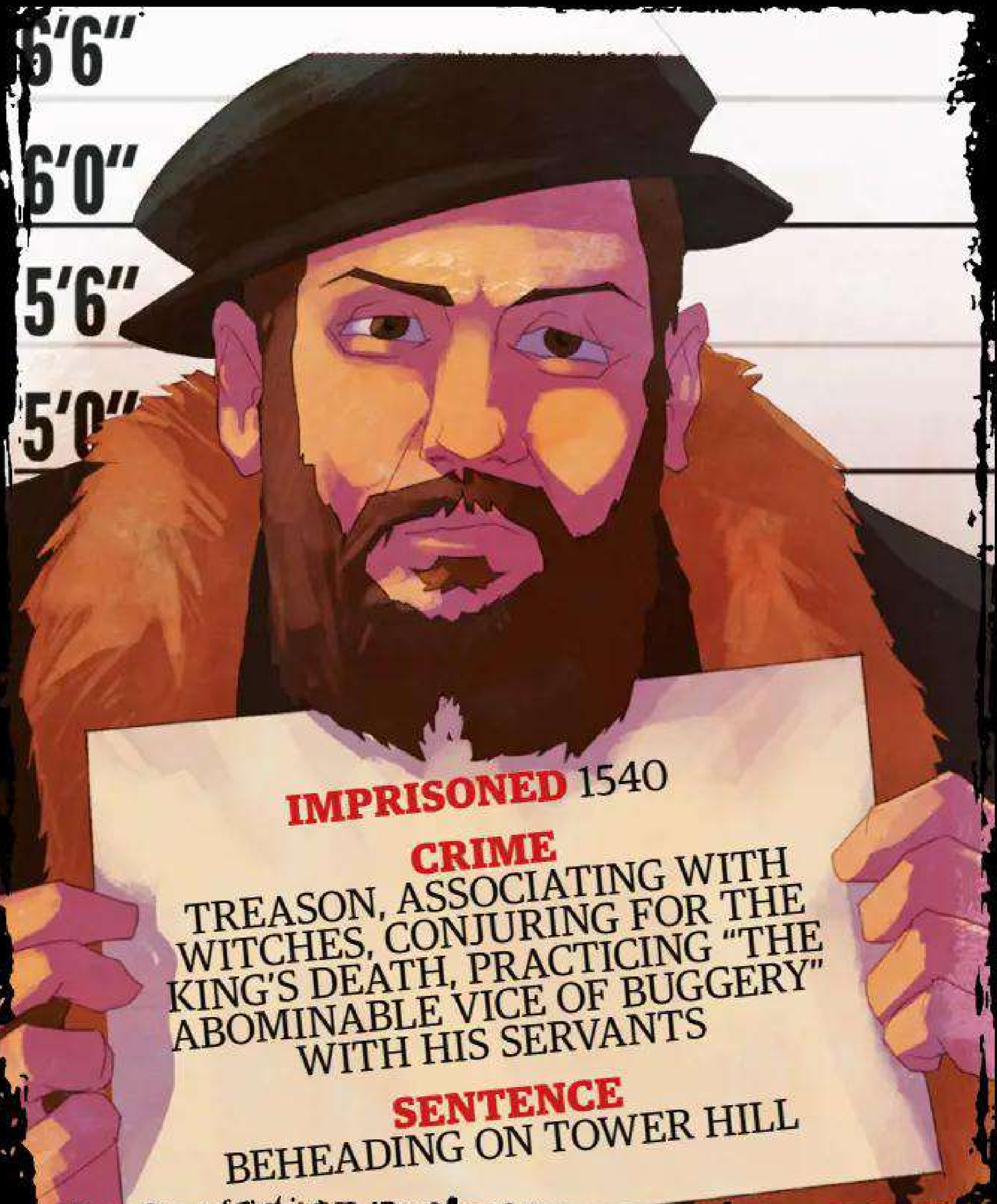
As the illegitimate daughter of the duke of Buckingham – beheaded for treason in 1521 – Margaret Bulmer may have had a personal axe to grind with Henry's government. Her husband Sir John later claimed they had been forced to support the pilgrimage when their home was threatened, but by early 1537, he and Margaret had been drawn deep into the rebellion. By then, rebel leaders were being rounded up and arrested. The Bulmers had three options: flee into exile (an admission of guilt), risk answering a royal summons, or raise rebellion once more. Margaret argued for the latter, saying that to be separated from her husband would be worse than death. Sir John agreed, but their plot was swiftly betrayed and both Bulmers were arrested and sent to the Tower. They pleaded guilty together, were condemned together and were executed for treason on the same day. Sir John was given the relative mercy of hanging and beheading but Margaret suffered the full penalty of a female traitor and was burned to death at Smithfield.

MARGARET POLE, COUNTESS OF SALISBURY: MOTHER PAYING FOR THE SINS OF HER SON

Margaret had a long history with the Tower: her father George, duke of Clarence, had been drowned in a butt of malmsey wine there when she was a child. The royal blood she inherited from Clarence made her a threat to the throne throughout Henry VIII's reign, but it was her son Reginald's actions that doomed her. In 1536, Reginald was a cardinal in Rome, and his condemnation of Henry VIII's religious changes exacerbated already tense relations between the King and the Pole family. Margaret had been a close friend and servant of both Catherine of Aragon and her daughter Princess Mary. She was probably as unhappy with Henry's religious changes as Reginald, but astute enough not to admit it.

When it was discovered that members of her family were in contact with Reginald, Margaret was seized. With evidence probably fabricated by Thomas Cromwell, she was arrested in 1539. She was condemned as a traitor and imprisoned in the Tower. During her incarceration, the 67-year-old Margaret was provided servants, clothing and food and probably hoped for a pardon. Suddenly, in May 1541, it was announced she would be executed. "Not knowing of what crime she was accused, nor how she had been sentenced," Margaret went to her execution. There was not even time to bring the executioner to London so, "a wretched and blundering youth… hacked her head and shoulders to pieces in the most pitiful manner."

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6'0"
5'6"
IMPRISONED 1540
CRIME
TREASON, ASSOCIATING WITH WITCHES, CONJURING FOR THE KING'S DEATH, PRACTICING "THE ABOMINABLE VICE OF BUGGERY" WITH HIS SERVANTS
SENTENCE
BEHEADING ON TOWER HILL

WALTER, LORD HUNGERFORD: FAITHFUL SERVANT

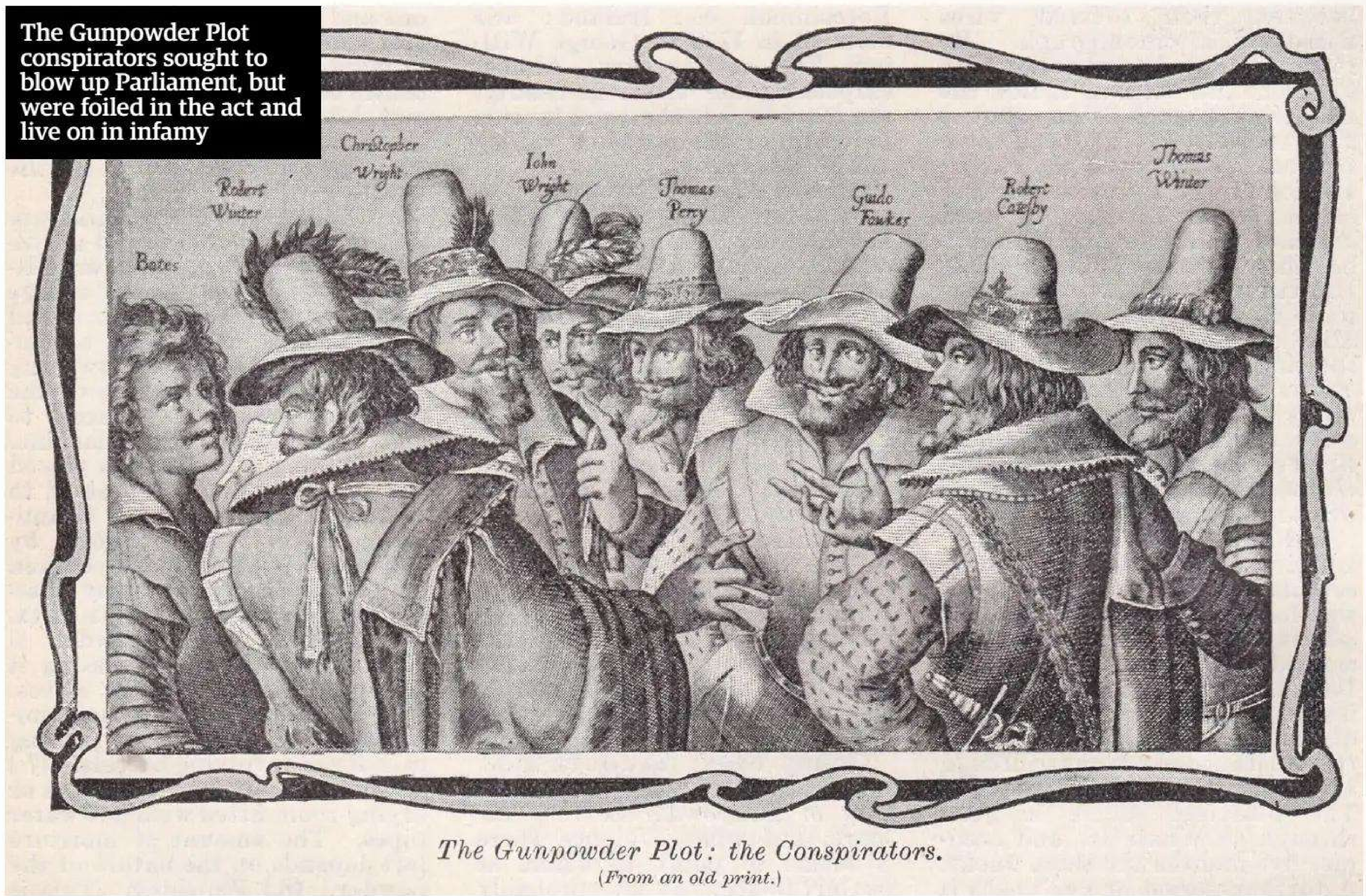
Walter Hungerford's political rise and fall was closely connected with that of his patron, Thomas Cromwell. While Cromwell was Henry VIII's chief minister, Hungerford's star was very much in the ascendant: he became a sheriff and a baron. But it all came crashing down when Henry divorced Anne and blamed Cromwell for the disastrous marriage. Hungerford's fall was swift to follow. Accusations of "certain grave misdemeanours" spiralled into bizarre accusations about the activities within his West Country home. Hungerford's wife Elizabeth claimed to have been "continually locked up in one of the towers of his castle" for three or four years, with keepers who had repeatedly attempted to poison her. Lady Hungerford accused her husband of wanting her dead because it was cheaper than getting a divorce. She also noticed "many strange things about her husband›s demeanour": he had consulted sorcerers and a witch called Mother Roche to learn "how long the King should live". He had aided and abetted a traitor who sympathised with the Pilgrimage of Grace, and he had been having sexual relations with his male servants, which was a felony. It added up to a compelling blend of heresy, sexual misconduct and treason.

After a brief imprisonment in the Tower, Hungerford joined his old master Cromwell on the scaffold at Tower Hill on 28 July 1540. Still associated even in death, the heads of Hungerford and Cromwell were exhibited together on London Bridge after their execution.

© Alamy, David Cousens

GUNPOWDER, TREASON & PLOT

This 17th-century act of treason has become immortalised as part of British 'Bonfire Night' celebrations, but had a terrifying and bloody outcome



The Gunpowder Plot conspirators sought to blow up Parliament, but were foiled in the act and live on in infamy

"Remember, remember, the fifth of November, gunpowder, treason and plot". Centuries of British schoolchildren will be familiar with the old rhyme, shouting 'penny for the Guy!' in the hopes of raising a little money for their home-made effigy. An effigy which was set to burn on the nearest bonfire. Of Britain's rich and varied traditions, those surrounding the Gunpowder Plot are the most curious. On 5 November every year, we remember the failed act of regicide and treason by 13 men, most of whom met their death shortly thereafter. The aim of the conspirators was to blow up the Houses of Parliament and assassinate King James I. Under the reign of James I, British Catholics had hoped for greater religious freedoms, following years of persecution. However, James I proved himself to be anything but tolerant, and enforced even more restrictions and punishments on the Catholic minority. In response, 13 men gathered together and schemed to take down the monarchy and government in one enormous and dramatic act.

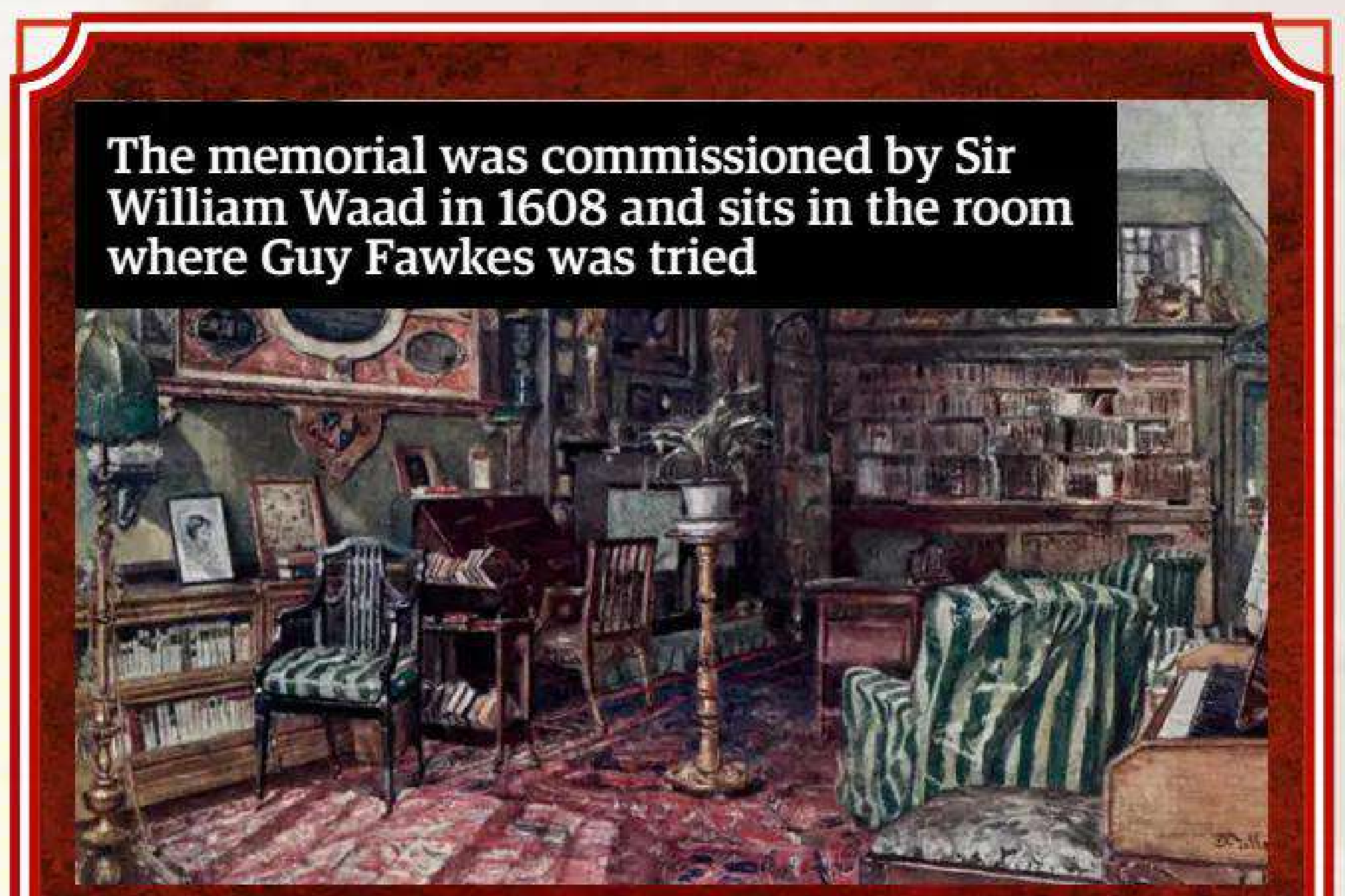
> "Rather than deny any involvement, Fawkes boldly explained that he wished to murder the King and his lords"

The most famous of these men today is Guy Fawkes, a devout and educated man, who was drawn into the Gunpowder Plot by Thomas Wintour when the pair met in Spain. Leading the group was Wintour's cousin, Robert Catesby, who was joined by ten other men – many of whom were very wealthy – who supported his cause. Their goal was to blow up Parliament during its state opening, when the King, Queen, and the King's heir would be present, immediately wiping out the monarchy and seat of power. They hoped that the crown would then pass to the King's daughter, Elizabeth, subsequently leading to the Britain of religious freedoms that they so desired.

Few of the men knew anything about explosives, save for Guy Fawkes, who had learned about its usage during his time in the military. Therefore, it was Fawkes's role to place the gunpowder and lay an appropriate trail for ignition. The plan itself was simple, well-executed and would have succeeded, were it not for an anonymous letter that alerted the authorities beforehand. Royal Guards were sent to search The House of Lords the night before Parliament was to open, and it was in the cellars of the building that they caught Guy Fawkes in the act, armed with a lamp, a fuse, matches and 36 barrels of gunpowder.

Fawkes was immediately arrested and brought before King James I, who questioned his intentions. Rather than deny any involvement or plead for mercy, Fawkes boldly explained that he wished to murder the King and his lords, and was disappointed that he had failed in his efforts. Fawkes was subsequently taken to the Tower of London where he was brutally interrogated, as torture methods were employed in an attempt to force Fawkes to reveal his conspirators. While Fawkes spent days in agony, his conspirators sought shelter in the Midlands but were captured a few days later. While some men, including Robert Catesby, were shot dead, others were captured and brought to the Tower of London where they were tried and sentenced for committing treason.

The Gunpowder Plot conspirators suffered a painful and humiliating death. Dragged through the streets of London by a horse, they were led to Westminster Yard and publicly hung, drawn and quartered. Guy Fawkes, being the first caught and most infamous of the conspirators, was last to the scaffold. An onlooker at the time recorded that Fawkes's body was so broken by torture, that he had to be helped by the hangman to climb the ladder to the gallows. Reportedly, the noose was strung so high – perhaps in an act of mercy by the hangman – that the fall immediately broke his neck, sparing further torture. The bodies of the gunpowder plotters were displayed across the city of London as a bloody warning against those who would seek to harm the King.



The memorial was commissioned by Sir William Waad in 1608 and sits in the room where Guy Fawkes was tried

AN OFFICIAL MEMORIAL

The Tower of London has a curious memorial within its walls, and one installed just a few short years after the Gunpowder Plot was foiled

In the walls of the section known as the Council Chamber within the King's House, a large wall memorial commemorates the deaths of those involved in the Gunpowder Plot. Considering they conspired to blow up governmental buildings and murder countless men, it seems a curious choice. However, it's believed that the memorial worked as both a celebration of the plot being foiled, but also a warning to incoming prisoners that what lay ahead was short, brutal, and inevitable.

Centuries later, bonfires are still lit in Britain on 5 November

© Alamy

THE ASYLUM OF HORRORS

'Bedlam' has become a byword for chaos and pandemonium, so how did an early asylum give its name to this term?

Bethlem is the world's oldest psychiatric institution, originally founded on Bishopsgate in 1247 as the Priory of St Mary of Bethlehem. People shortened 'Bethlem Royal Hospital' to Bethlem, and then Bedlam, in the 1660s. Because of this, the word 'bedlam' has two definitions: the specific hospital, and chaos, disorder, and uproar. The meanings came from the hectic conditions within the hospital.

CONDITIONS AND 'CARE'

While the Priory of St Mary of Bethlehem opened in 1247, it wasn't until the 1370s that the hospital started to accept the mentally ill. Bedlam gained its reputation for working with 'insane' patients in 1403.

At the time, society believed it was demons or bad family ties that caused madness. This meant that people with mental health issues were often hidden away so that their relatives could avoid the social stigma of admitting that madness ran in the family.

By the mid-17th century, the 400-year-old building on Bishopsgate was badly overcrowded. Architect Robert Hooke designed a new baroque-style hospital on Moorfields, set in beautiful parkland. It opened in 1676, making it the country's first purpose-built mental health hospital.

Unfortunately, the levels of care didn't match the façade's opulence. A belief persisted from the medieval period that the mentally ill couldn't feel hot or cold, so doctors kept patients in cold cells with no access to hot water. They isolated others in the dark since they believed that solitude would force a recovery. The building was riddled with subsidence, making the crowded cells damp.

One patient, American seaman James Norris (incorrectly named as William by the press), spent years chained to a wall. He was admitted in 1800 and put into an iron harness in 1804 after attacking the staff. In 1814, philanthropist Edward Wakefield discovered him chained in the same spot and campaigned for his release. Norris died a few months later.

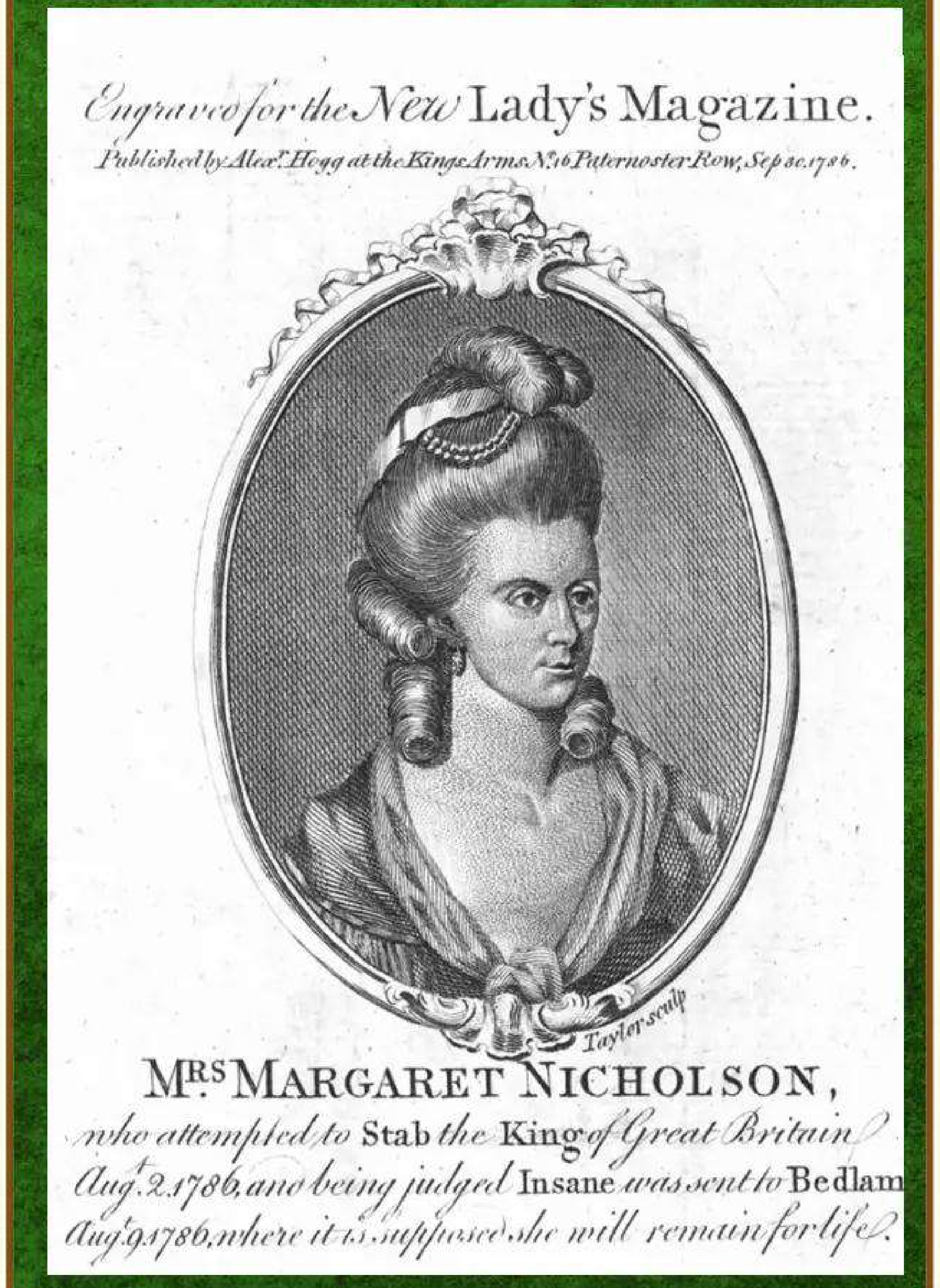
TREATMENTS

Bedlam divided patients according to their needs, with separate wards for men and women. There were wards for noisy patients

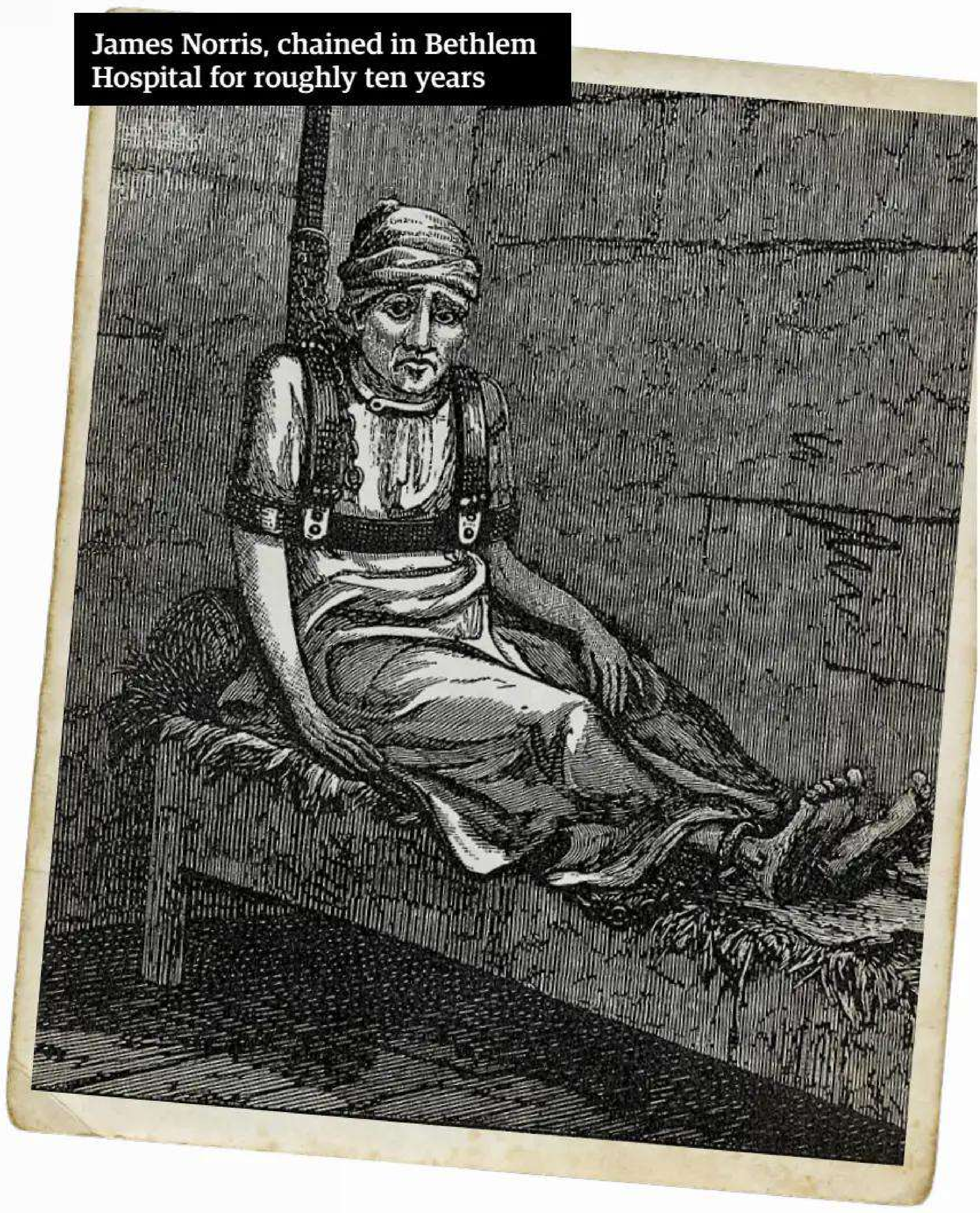
A NOTORIOUS INMATE

A would-be assassin of the King ended up in Bedlam as an act of kindness

In 1786, an unemployed seamstress named Margaret Nicholson attacked King George III with a dessert knife. While some saw it as an attempted assassination, the King saw it for what it was: a cry for help. Some sources suggest she actually accosted him to ask about a petition she had sent him. He ordered her to be put into Bedlam to avoid the death sentence, although she was kept there for 42 years. When she first arrived, she spent a year in chains before being kept with the so-called 'incurable' patients. Records showed no sign of madness during her time at the hospital, and she died there in 1828.


Engraved for the New Lady's Magazine.
Published by Alexr. Hogg at the Kings Arms No 16 Paternoster Row, Sep 30.1786.
Taylor sculp
Mrs. Margaret Nicholson,
who attempted to Stab the King of Great Britain
Augt. 2.1786, and being judged Insane was sent to Bedlam
Augt. 9.1786, where it is supposed she will remain for life.

> *"A belief persisted that the mentally ill couldn't feel hot or cold, so doctors kept patients in cold cells with no hot water"*


James Norris, chained in Bethlem Hospital for roughly ten years

"The warders shouted details about their patients as if they were prize exhibits at a carnival"

and 'incurable' patients, a padded room for violent patients, and galleries for patients suffering with conditions like melancholy.

Treatment varied depending on the era and the level of misunderstanding about mental illness. Doctors used bleeding and purging when they believed an imbalance of the four 'humours' – blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm – caused illness. For example, too much 'black bile' caused melancholy. They bled patients to remove excess blood, while purging – often with laxatives – was used to remove excess black bile. An apothecary prescribed sedatives to keep patients quiet.

Cold water therapy dunked terrified patients into ice baths. Patients could also be strapped to a chair and spun around quickly for a barbaric practice known as rotational therapy.

Once the hospital moved to St George's Fields in 1815 and understanding of mental illness improved, so too did the treatment, with patients allowed to go outside to play sport and enjoy the fresh air.

BEDLAM TOURISM

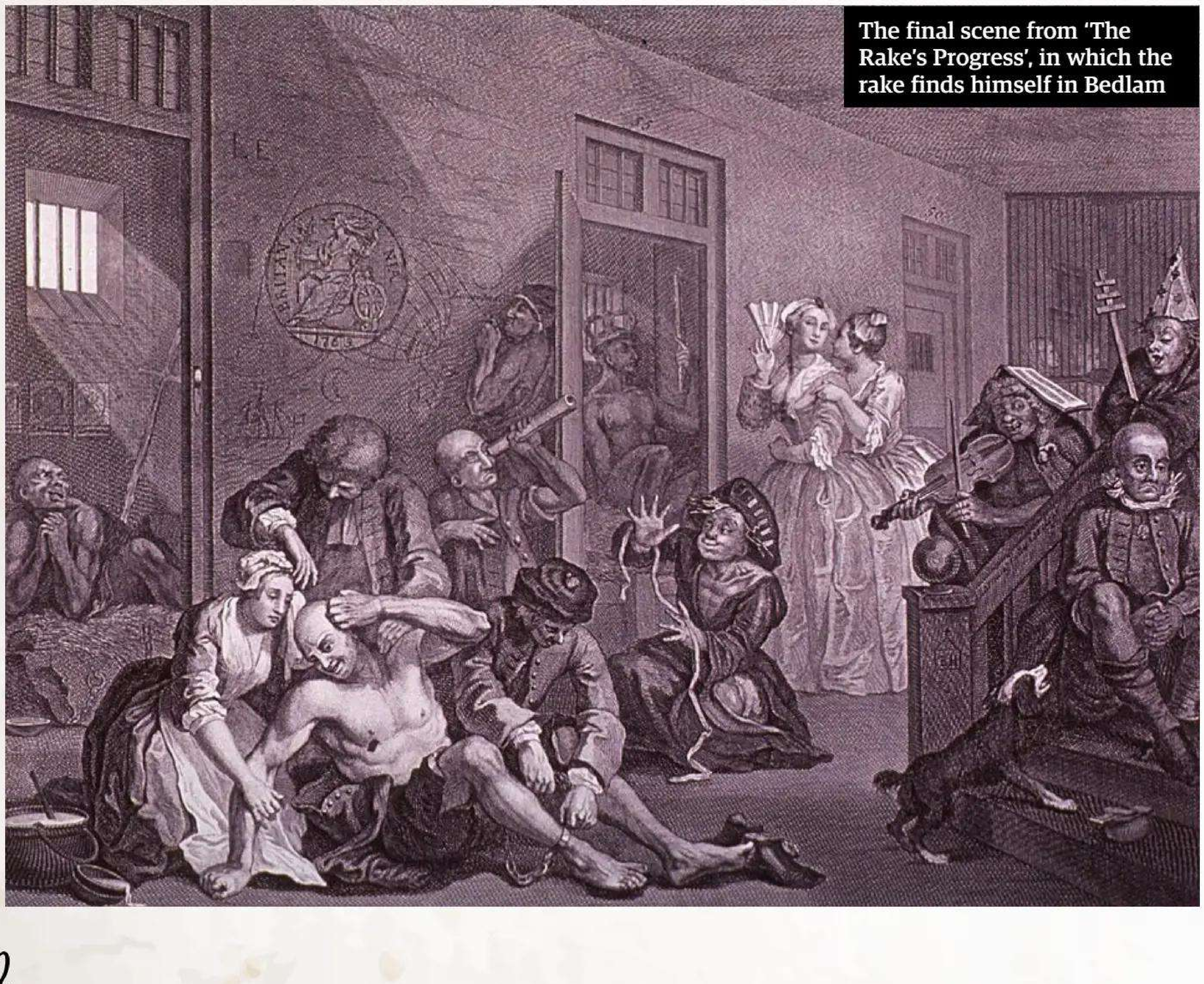
One reason why Bedlam's horrifying reputation survived is that the hospital charged admission for visitors to see the patients in earlier centuries. The asylum was even one of the recommended 'shows' of London, with some estimates suggesting that over 90,000 people would visit in a year.

Officially, the hospital encouraged visits due to the belief that sin caused mental illness, so visitors seeing the patients' distress would warn them against sin. In reality, visitors were simply to generate income. Thieves stole from vulnerable patients, while other patients sang ballads or rattled chains in exchange for gin. The warders shouted details about their patients as if they were prize exhibits at a carnival.

Artist William Hogarth immortalised these scenes of Bedlam tourism in 1733 in 'The Rake's Progress'. This series of eight paintings depicted the fall of a fictional rich heir, Tom Rakewell, with Bedlam his final destination. Hogarth used satire to criticise those paying to visit the patients, rather than the patients themselves.

POLITICAL PRISONERS

Political prisoners ended up in Bedlam from the 17th century. Richard Farnham, a weaver from Colchester, claimed to be Jesus and tried to overthrow Charles I. Surprisingly, Farnham enjoyed popular support, so the authorities didn't want to execute him for treason and possibly

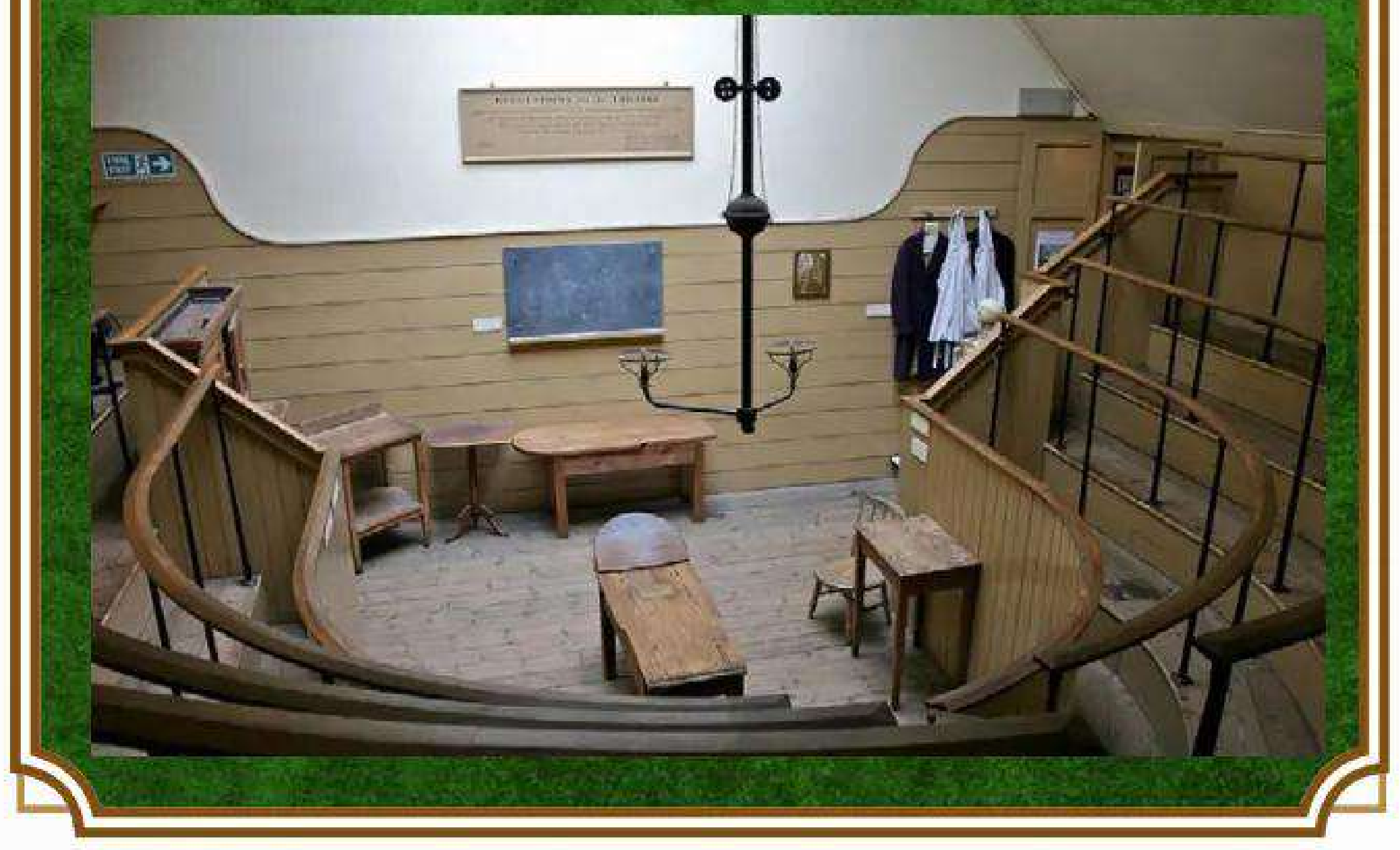

The final scene from 'The Rake's Progress', in which the rake finds himself in Bedlam

THE OLD OPERATING THEATRE MUSEUM

Interested in medical history? London is home to one of the oldest surviving operating theatres in the world

Found in the attic of the Old St Thomas' Church, the Old Operating Theatre is Europe's oldest surviving theatre for female patients. The attached herb garret was originally used to dry and store herbs, later used to make medicine, and it is now a fascinating apothecary museum.

Before the hospital added the operating theatre in 1822, the surgeons operated on patients in the neighbouring ward, which was a painful and distressing experience. The theatre allowed surgeons to operate in a dedicated space while demonstrating skills to students. The entrance to the hospital was blocked up in 1862 when the hospital relocated to Lambeth, and the theatre remained forgotten until 1956 when it was rediscovered by Raymond Russell. Nowadays, the staff demonstrate the use of vicious-looking tools to perform a lithotomy to break up bladder stones, one of the most common 19th-century procedures at the hospital.



anger the public. The authorities put him into Bedlam and declared him insane. In 1607, Bartholomew Helston claimed to be the son of Mary, Queen of Scots and ended up in Bedlam.

People who were inconvenient to their families often ended up in Bedlam. A man named Mr Evans was committed but showed he was sane before proving he'd been the victim of a conspiracy. A man named Mr Linnett had his wife, Catherine, committed to Bedlam after she fell ill, although doctors released her after seven months when she was clearly well.

18TH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

The infamous Monro family ended up in charge of Bedlam for 125 years, beginning with James Monro in 1728. His son, John, took over as physician in 1751, with his son, Thomas, taking charge in 1787. Each son continued the barbaric treatment methods of his father.

In 1758, William Battie, the resident physician at nearby St Luke's asylum, published his 'Treatise on Madness'. He argued for managing madness and heavily criticised the methods at Bedlam. John Monro responded with his fiery 'Remarks on Dr Battie's Treatise on Madness' to defend his cruel methods.

While Battie did believe in treating patients rather than abusing them, it's also true that he attacked Bedlam to break the Monro family grip on treating madness in London. The Monros took no medical students, and Bedlam had a waiting list, despite its reputation. Battie's own hospital, St Luke's, competed with Bedlam for paying patients, and Battie also ran private asylums. Madness was a profitable business for these two men.

However, private asylums didn't guarantee good patient care – the quality of treatment depended on how much you could pay. For example, Hoxton House Asulym was so overcrowded that patients had to share beds. But in 1774, new legislation regulated the industry, so asylums could only renew their annual licence following a successful inspection by the Royal College of Physicians.

19TH-CENTURY REFORMATION

Bedlam's Moorfields building was already crumbling by 1815, having been built quickly and badly. Even in 1699, satirists noticed how poorly maintained it was.

As patient numbers continued to climb, the hospital board found a new site at St George's Fields in Southwark. The new building was designed to contain smaller, more specialised wards to cater to specific needs.

The 19th century saw improvements in mental health care. Physical restraints were criticised as being barbaric and following the Norris case, Edward Wakefield campaigned for better conditions across England. The government formed the Committee on Madhouses in 1815. Thomas Monro told the committee that they only used physical restraints on paupers, but the Committee rejected a class-based system of treatment. Monro resigned in 1816.

The government passed the Lunacy Act in 1845, forcing counties to provide asylums. In 1857, Bedlam stopped admitting poor patients and focused on patients on low incomes.

21ST-CENTURY BEDLAM

Bethlem moved from Southwark to its current location, a former country estate in Beckenham, Kent, in 1930. The central block of the St George's Fields building became the Imperial War Museum. Thankfully, the contemporary Bethlem hospital has since become a valued institution for psychiatric treatment.

The central block of Bedlam's St George's Fields site is now the Imperial War Museum

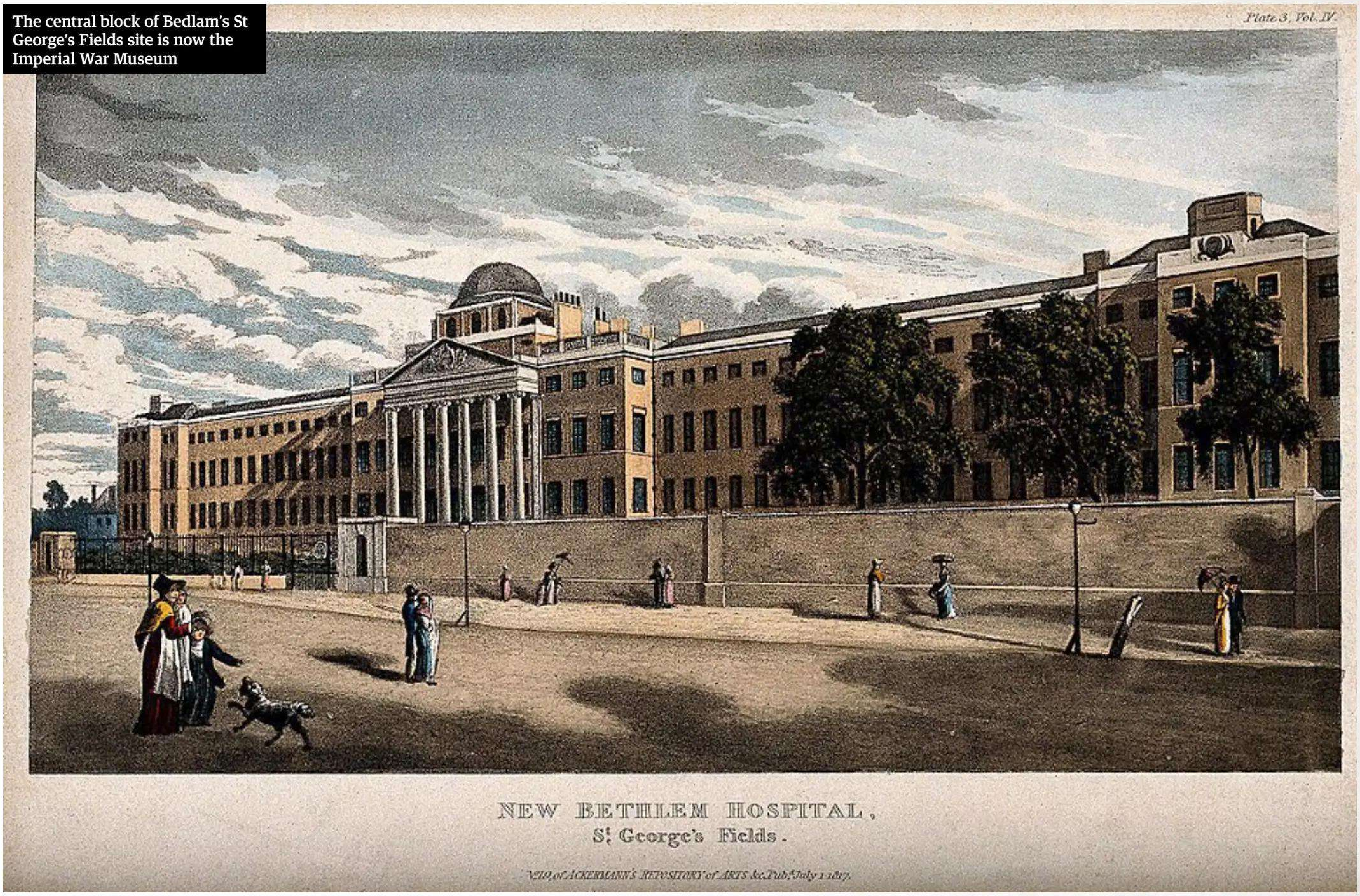


Plate 3, Vol. IV.
NEW BETHLEM HOSPITAL,
S^t George's Fields.
N^{o}19, of ACKERMANN'S REPOSITORY of ARTS &c. Pub^d July 1 1817.

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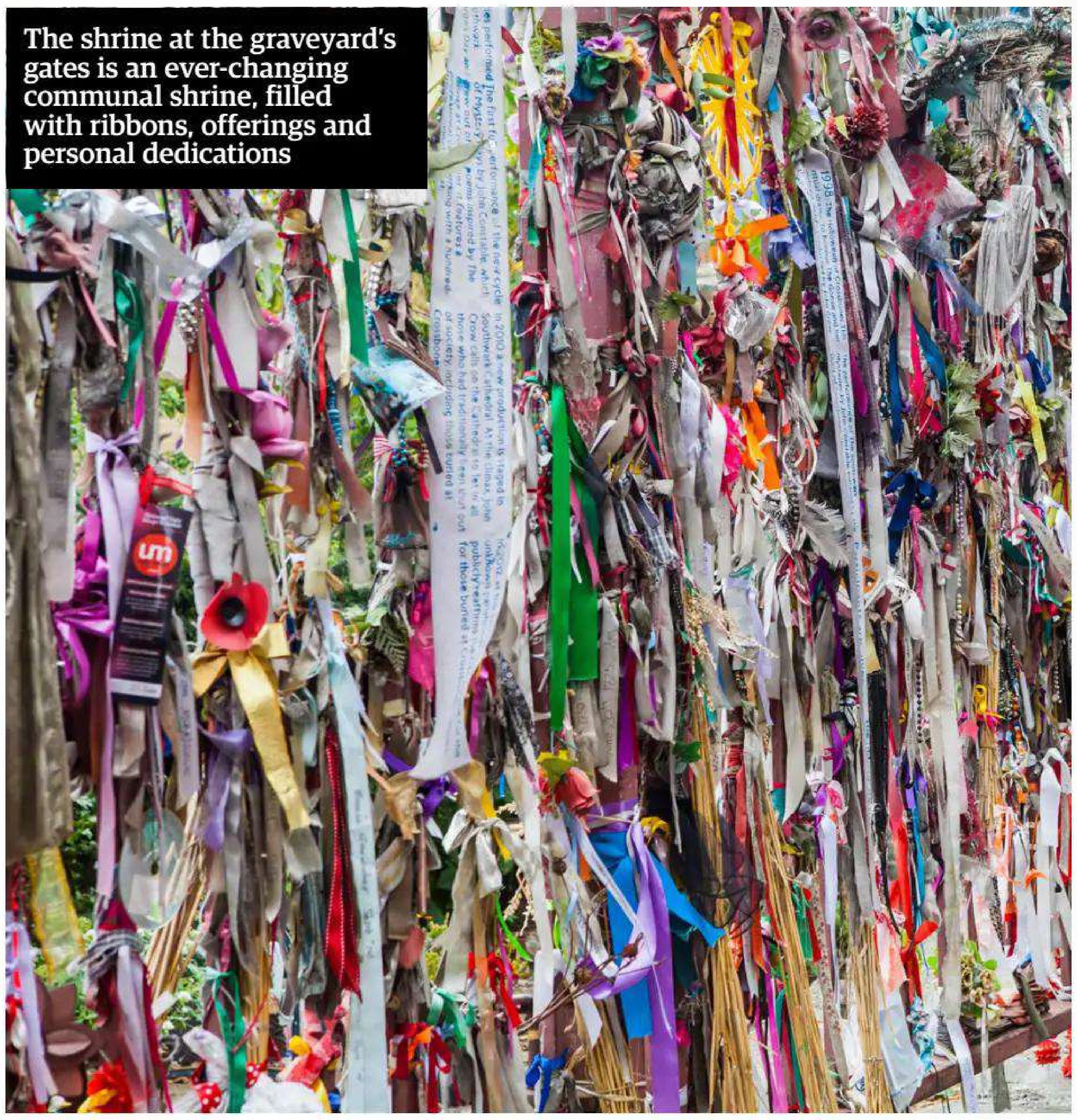
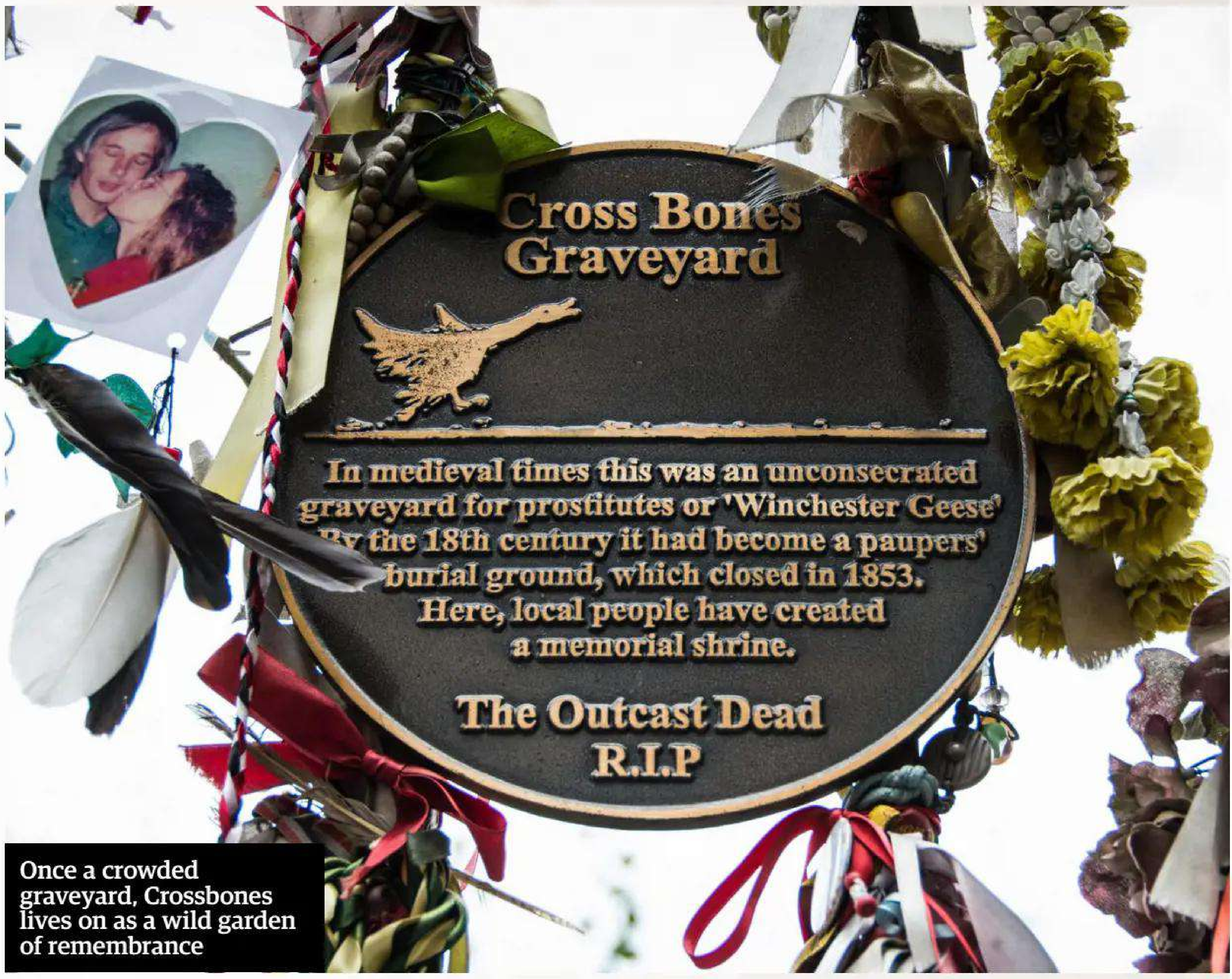
CROSSBONES GRAVEYARD

This unassuming plot of land, just a stone's throw from Shakespeare's Globe, marks the resting place of over 15,000 paupers


The shrine at the graveyard's gates is an ever-changing communal shrine, filled with ribbons, offerings and personal dedications


Cross Bones
Graveyard
In medieval times this was an unconsecrated graveyard for prostitutes or 'Winchester Geese'
By the 18th century it had become a paupers' burial ground, which closed in 1853.
Here, local people have created a memorial shrine.
The Outcast Dead
R.I.P
Once a crowded graveyard, Crossbones lives on as a wild garden of remembrance

Situated in an area of extreme urban poverty once known as the Mint, Crossbones (or 'Cross Bones') graveyard functioned as a pauper's burial ground for centuries. Believed to have been established between the 16th and 17th centuries, Crossbones' first interments were sex workers known locally as 'Winchester Geese'. These women were licenced to conduct their business by the Bishop of Winchester, who permitted the women to work in the many brothels located within the 'Liberty of the Clink'; an area in Southwark that lay outside the official confines – and jurisdiction – of the City of London. Here, all manner of otherwise illegal and unsavoury activities could be conducted, from sex work to bear baiting. This area was best known for its infamous prison, known as 'The Clink', once one of the oldest prisons in England. The area known as 'liberty' had been granted permission to licence sex work since the 12th century, and many brothels thrived within its seemingly lawless confines. However, in 1889, the area was once again absorbed into the County of London, and Southwark's den of iniquity was no more.

First mentioned in John Stow's 1598 Survey of London, he recorded that the area was used for the burial of sex workers, namely that 'a plot of ground, called the single woman's churchyard, [was] appointed for them, far from the parish church'. The graveyard eventually grew to become a general paupers' burial space, but remained consecrated, so individuals from all backgrounds could be buried communally. Although the graveyard was located in a notorious and dangerous slum, it was a vital part of the community, as most conventional and consecrated grave sites would forbid the burial of so-called 'single women' (sex workers). Crossbones was in use until 1853, when the land was so full of bodies that it began to constitute a serious public heath risk.

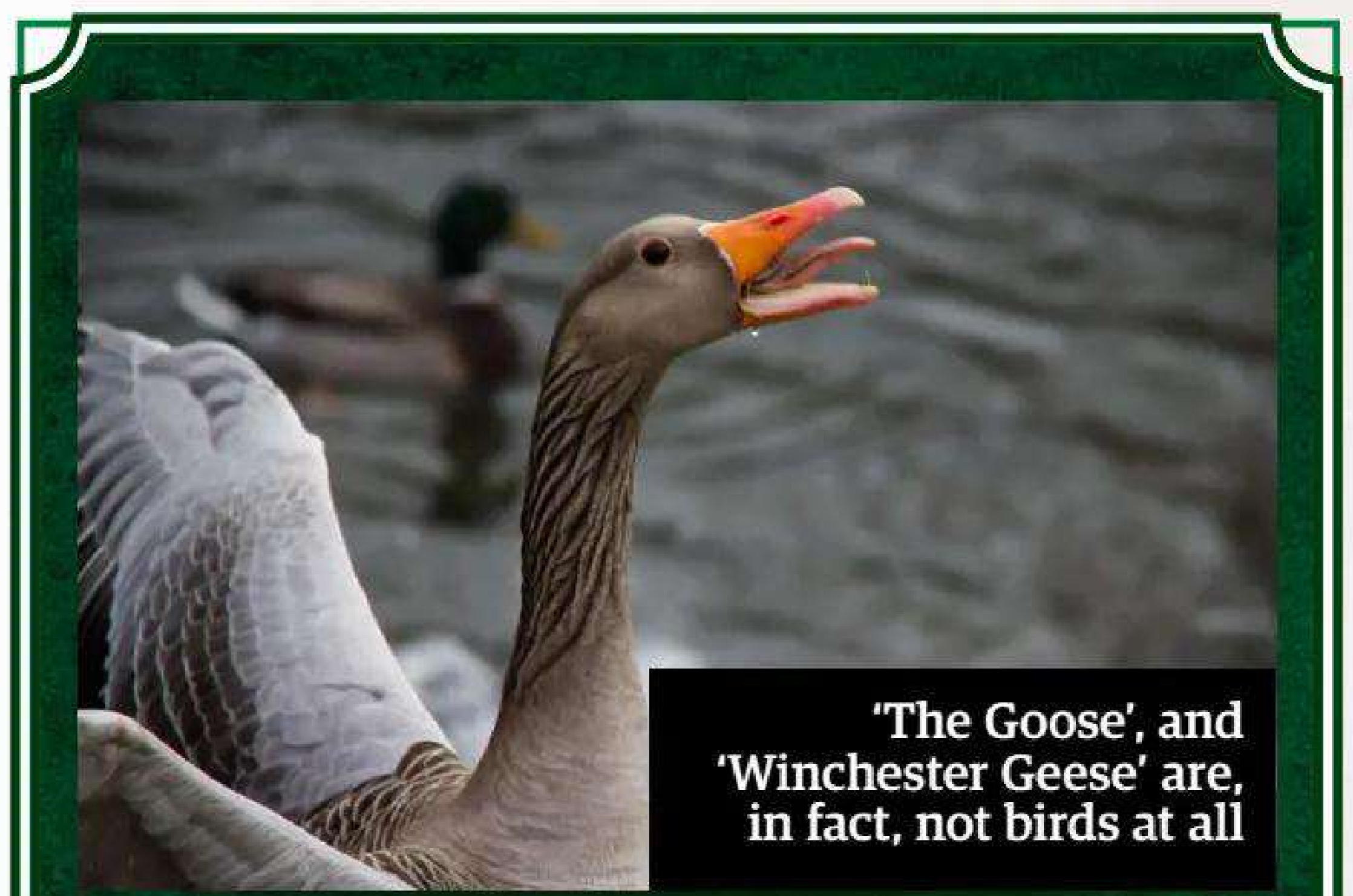
It's unknown where the name 'Crossbones' or 'Cross Bones' originated, as the first written record of such a name appeared in 1833, although the graveyard existed for centuries beforehand.

After Crossbones' closure, the land was sold on with a view to redevelop the old graveyard. However, years of successful objections by the local community and the enforcement of the Disused Burial Grounds Act saved Crossbones from the indignation of full redevelopment, until progress became unavoidable and the site was topped by warehousing for a time. By the 1980s, Transport For London set its sights on local redevelopments and began the long and arduous process of archaeological excavation, where the realities of centuries of poverty revealed themselves from the earth. The burials of Crossbones were densely packed, with many bodies showing signs of diseases and conditions such as smallpox, scurvy, rickets and tuberculosis; all of which would be nurtured in the dark squalor of the Mint's slums. It was estimated that over 15,000 people were buried at Crossbones, with most of these individuals being women. One archaeological survey revealed that over a third of all bodies uncovered were either pregnant, or had just given birth, with many babies and young children buried nearby.

Following the revelations of the ongoing digs, local communities began to take notice of Crossbones once again, installing their own memorials, forming a Friends of Cross Bones group and petitioning local authorities to preserve the graveyard for good.

These conservation efforts were instigated by two people, John Constable and Katy Nicholls, who developed their own spiritual relationships with the history of the site, alongside handling the practicalities of preserving a historic site.

Today, Crossbones is at the heart of a diverse community. Short memorial ceremonies are held every month, and many individuals – including contemporary sex workers – find solace in the memories of 'the outcast dead'.


'The Goose', and 'Winchester Geese' are, in fact, not birds at all

MAGICAL WORKS

Crossbones isn't a simple place of remembrance, but also a source of magical inspiration

Alongside his preservation of Crossbones, John Constable's magical and spiritual practice is closely informed by the anonymous dead. Producing a series of poems and plays titled *The Southwark Mysteries*, he claims that their contents were told, or 'transmitted', to him by the spirit of a medieval sex worker, named 'The Goose'. 'The Goose' has since taken an important role in the spiritual practices of many people who interact with Crossbones.

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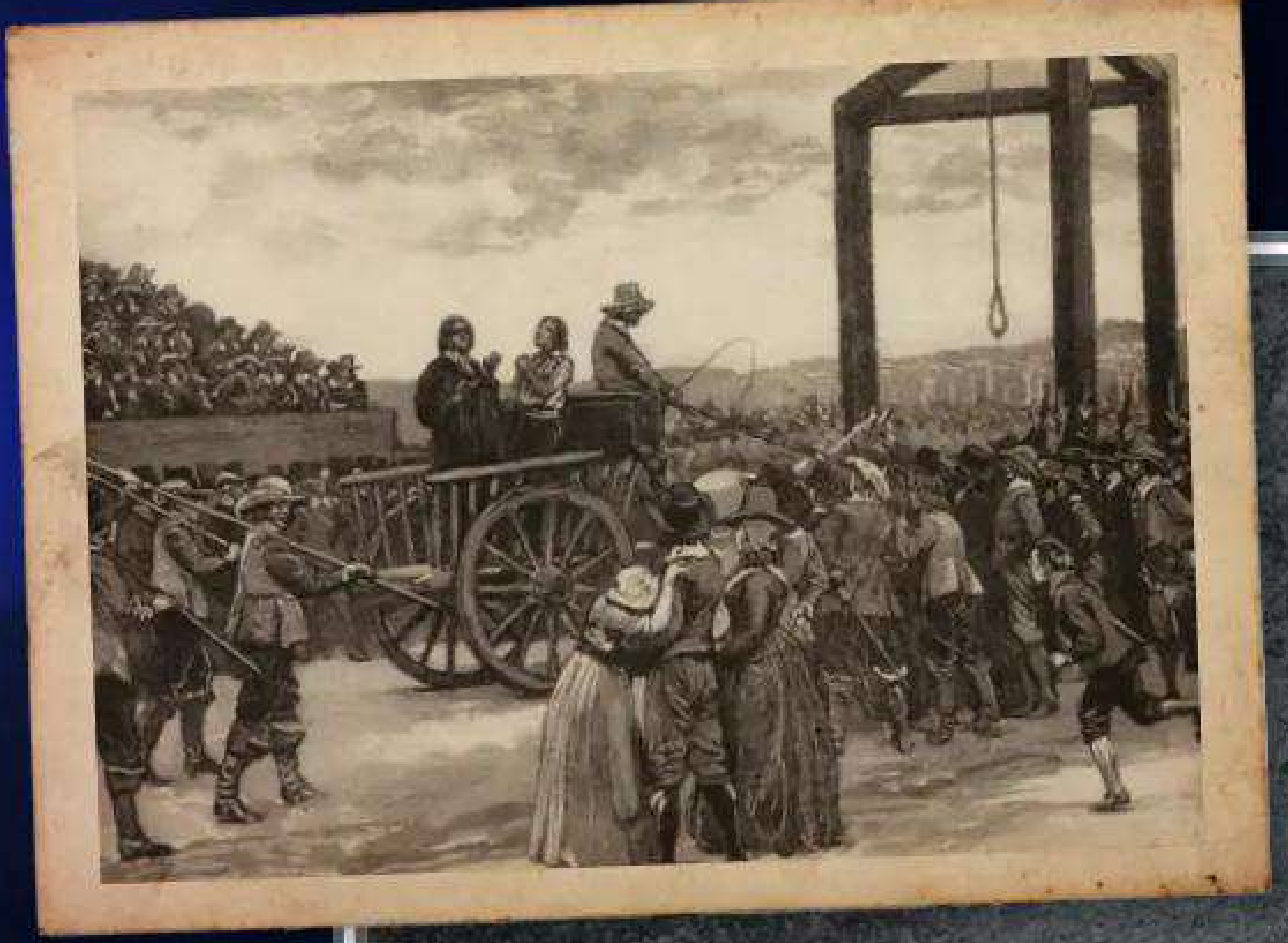
(JEKYLL AND) HYDE PARK

To most Londoners, Hyde Park is a green oasis in the middle of the busy city. However, its true history reveals a decidedly darker tale

Hyde Park is not only one of the world's most famous parks, but it has a history dating back over half a century. The land that makes up Hyde Park was originally bought by King Henry VIII who wanted it for hunting purposes, before Charles I opened the park to the public in 1637. Since then, Hyde Park has sat at the centre of waves of social change. From the traditions of public speaking at 'Speaker's Corner' to protests of Women's Suffrage, this historic green space has its finger on the pulse of a modern and changing Britain. Yet for all its modernity, the park is built on centuries of dark tales…



Tyburn Tree
THE INFAMOUS GALLOWS

The Tyburn Tree, and later Tyburn gallows, was the site for centuries of public executions

In the area now known as 'Speaker's Corner', there once stood an infamous 'hanging tree', where many unfortunate individuals gasped their last breath. The Tyburn Tree gained its name from the Tye Bourne brook that ran beneath the street, with its location situated at the junction of multiple Roman roads. Established as a site of execution in the early 12th century, The Tyburn Tree functioned as the primary and public place for the execution of traitors and hardened criminals from the surrounding areas of London and Essex. Later known as 'God's Tribunal', a three-legged gallows was installed on the site by the 16th century, which could accommodate up to 24 hangings at once. Prior to this, the first recorded hanging at the Tyburn Tree was in 1571 when John Story, later a Catholic martyr, was executed for treason.

Hangings at Tyburn took place up to 12 times a year until 1759, when the fixed gallows were removed and the principal location of hangings moved to Newgate Prison. While this streamlined the process of capital punishment, it disappointed countless Londoners who were used to enjoying the spectacle of a public hanging. It was said that the hanging of notorious escapologist and highwayman, Jack Sheppard, attracted a crowd of up to 200,000 onlookers. Being instances of public spectacle, spectator stands were eventually built for those attending hangings, with the wealthier viewers paying for prime seats. Yet on one occasion, these stands collapsed, leading to the death and serious injury of countless people. Today, the Tyburn Tree is commemorated with a simple round plaque and three oak trees, planted in 2014.

Rotten Row
LONDON'S ILLUMINATED ROAD

A beautiful bridle path today, Rotten Row was once the realm of highwaymen, hiding in the woodland of Hyde Park

Rotten Row began life as 'Route du Roi', a French phrase meaning 'King's Road', yet as time progressed, the name 'Rotten Row' was born. This lengthy road was Britain's first lamp-lit highway and was intended to be a safe way for King William III to travel from Whitehall to Kensington Palace. The new artificial lighting was meant to deter highwaymen who relied on the darkness of woodland to conduct their crimes. The lighting appeared to work, and for centuries thereafter, Rotten Row was a very fashionable place for the well-to-do of London to safely ride their horses in the heart of the city. Today, equestrian activities on Rotten Row are predominantly conducted by the Household Cavalry when exercising their horses.

Rotten Row is 1,384m (4,541ft) long and sits as a well-maintained bridle path through Hyde Park

© Alamy, Getty Images

IRA Bombing

THE BOMBINGS

In 1982, the Provisional IRA detonated a car bomb, targeting the procession of the Household Cavalry

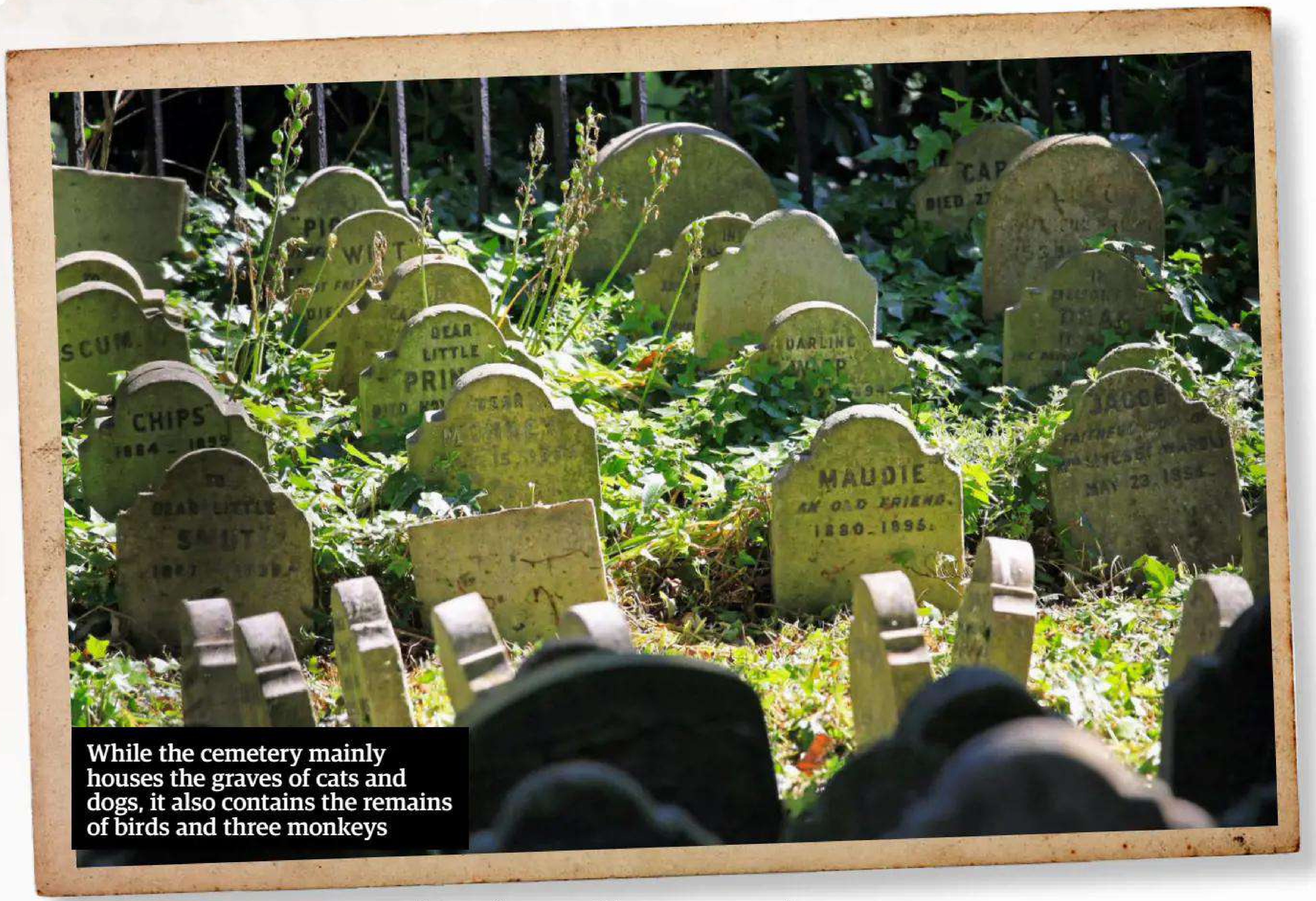
On 20 July 1982, the IRA staged a targeted attack on both Hyde Park and Regent's Park, with bombs detonating during military ceremonial processions. Eleven people lost their lives and many more were injured in an attack that terrified the capital. A nail bomb hidden inside a car was detonated at 10.43am when the Household Cavalry (the monarch's bodyguard regiment) were in the midst of their daily Changing of the Guard ceremony. Four soldiers died instantly and many others were injured.

The Regent's Park bombing occurred shortly thereafter at 12.55pm, when an explosive device placed beneath a bandstand detonated. At the time, a military band was playing to a gathered crowd of 120 people in a lunchtime concert. Seven band members were killed, and 24 were injured.

While nobody has ever been charged for the Regent's Park attack, the perpetrator of the Hyde Park attack was identified and sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment in 1987.

On 20 July 1982
at this spot a terrorist bomb was exploded
as The Queen's Life Guard was passing

Memorials have since been installed at both sites. The Hyde Park plaque is saluted daily by marching troops



While the cemetery mainly houses the graves of cats and dogs, it also contains the remains of birds and three monkeys

Pet Cemetery

THE HIDDEN GRAVEYARD

This tiny pet cemetery offers a glimpse into the Victorians' love of their four-legged friends

The Hyde Park Pet Cemetery was never something that was intentionally created – instead being a happy accident that got out of control. In 1881, a tiny Maltese Terrier called Cherry died of old age. Her owners, Mr and Mrs Barned, were heartbroken and wanted to lay her to rest in the place they all adored. They had befriended the park keeper, Mr Winbridge, some years prior, and asked him for permission to bury Cherry in the back garden of Victoria Lodge. Permission was given, and a tradition was born. Cherry's little headstone still stands within the cemetery, marked with the words: 'Poor Cherry. Died April 28. 1881'.

The next interment was Prince, the Duke of Cambridge's Yorkshire Terrier, after which the pet cemetery at Hyde Park gained a reputation as the fashionable place for beloved pets to spend eternity.

Park keeper Mr Winbridge conducted the burial services himself, but noted that much of this was done alone, as few owners could bear to be present for their last goodbye.

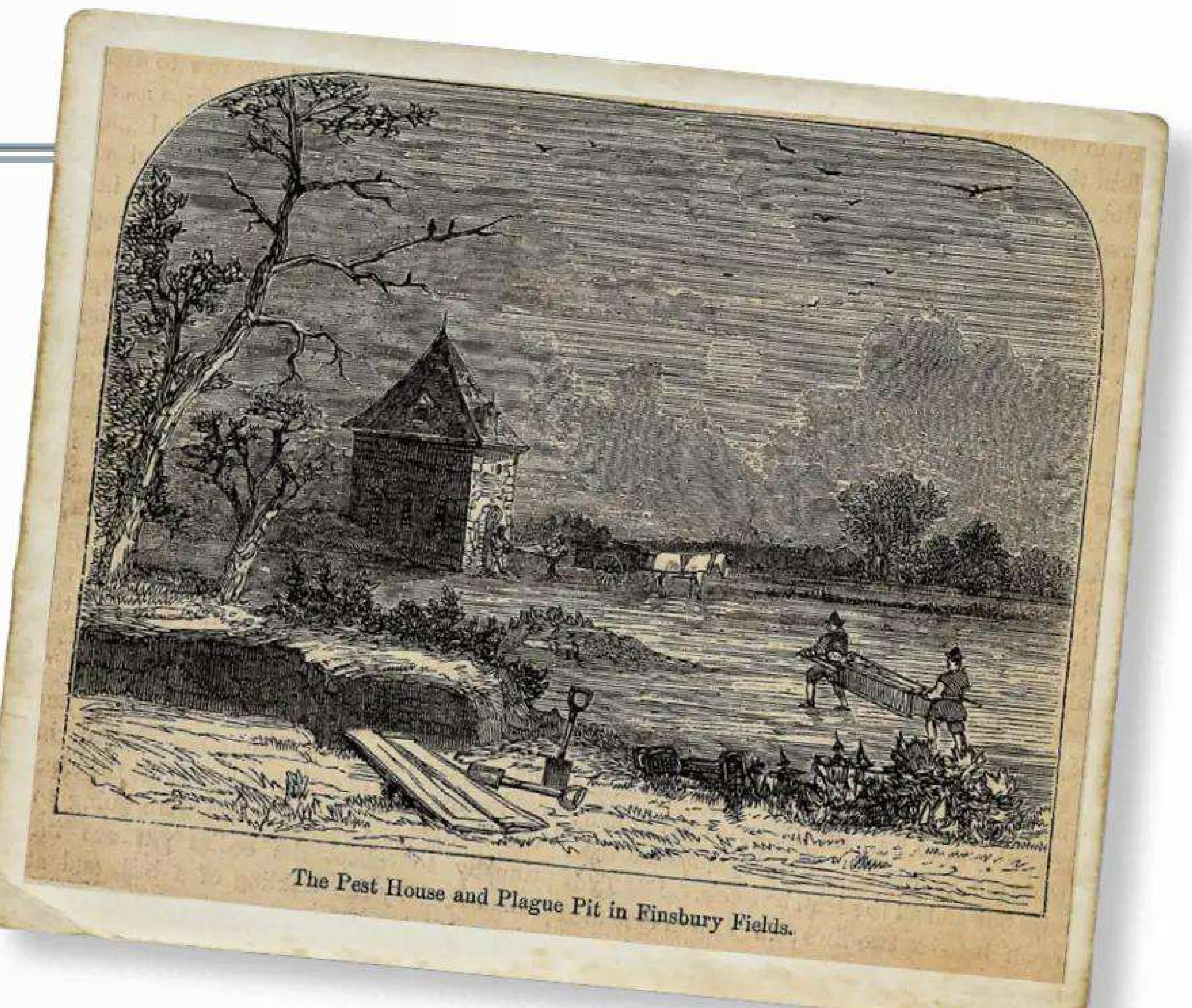
When the cemetery closed in 1903, around 300 tiny graves were crammed into the back garden of Victoria Lodge. Today, the Hyde Park pet cemetery is open to pre-booked tours only, but is a must-see for

Plague Pits

PLAGUE VICTIMS

Mass graves from the time of the plague are believed to lie beneath Hyde Park's earth

In 1665, the Great Plague hit London and at least 15% of its population succumbed to the disease. To cope with the increasing number of victims, quick and efficient methods of burying the dead were needed. Churchyards were overwhelmed and disease spread quickly between families, requiring swift solutions to an ever-growing problem. As such, London became peppered with enormous, unmarked, plague pits. Popular legend dictates that Hyde Park's own plague pit has not been archeologically exhumed and studied, yet building works are said to have suggested their existence, when construction of the underground Picadilly Line had to curve in order to avoid the pit. Much of Knightsbridge is said to sit upon several large plague pits and mass burial sites, each of which has influenced the development of the ever-growing city. While London constantly changes, its history of death and disease sits just beneath the surface, waiting to be rediscovered.


The Pest House and Plague Pit in Finsbury Fields.

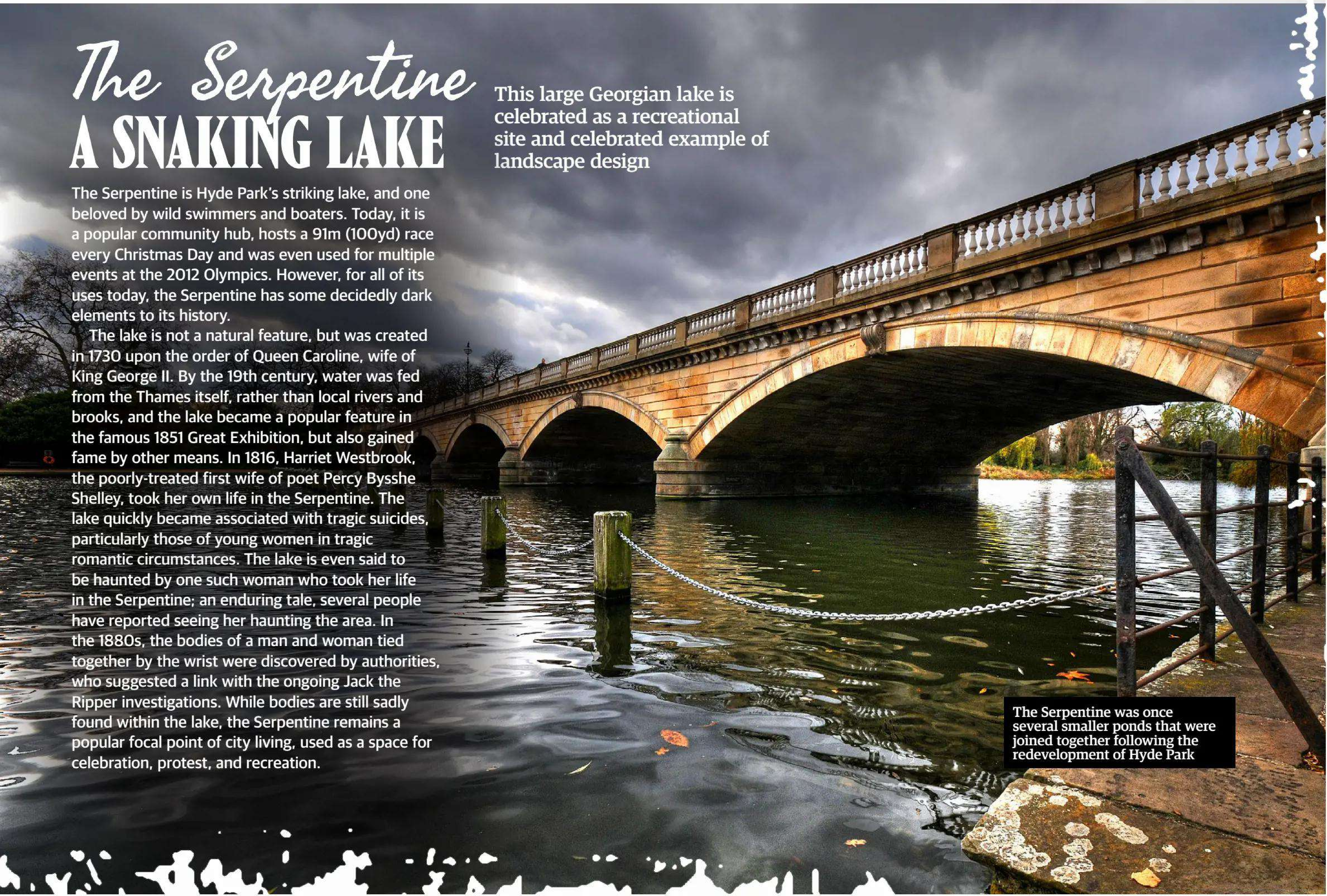
Some trees are said to be haunted by a dying man called Sammy, whose groans were heard around Lancaster Gate

Hauntings
A HAUNTED LAND

With a history as long and varied as Hyde Park's, it's little wonder that reports of spooky happenings are commonplace

If reports are to be believed, Hyde Park is as popular with the dead as the living. In 1877, the city nurtured a bout of phantom hysteria when reports of a ghostly carriage, complete with four spectral horses, appeared in the press. Many believed this thundering carriage to be the ghostly work of King George IV, who rode around the park in death before suddenly disappearing into thin air.

Hyde Park is also in possession of several haunted trees. One tree was said to be haunted by the spirit of 'Black Sally', a woman who was murdered as she dozed beneath its branches. Moaning was reported for years thereafter until the tree itself perished in the 1930s. The local homeless population reported many strange happenings by other trees, including a particularly evil elm, which was avoided, as it was said to whisper during the night, imploring anyone nearby to take their own life.



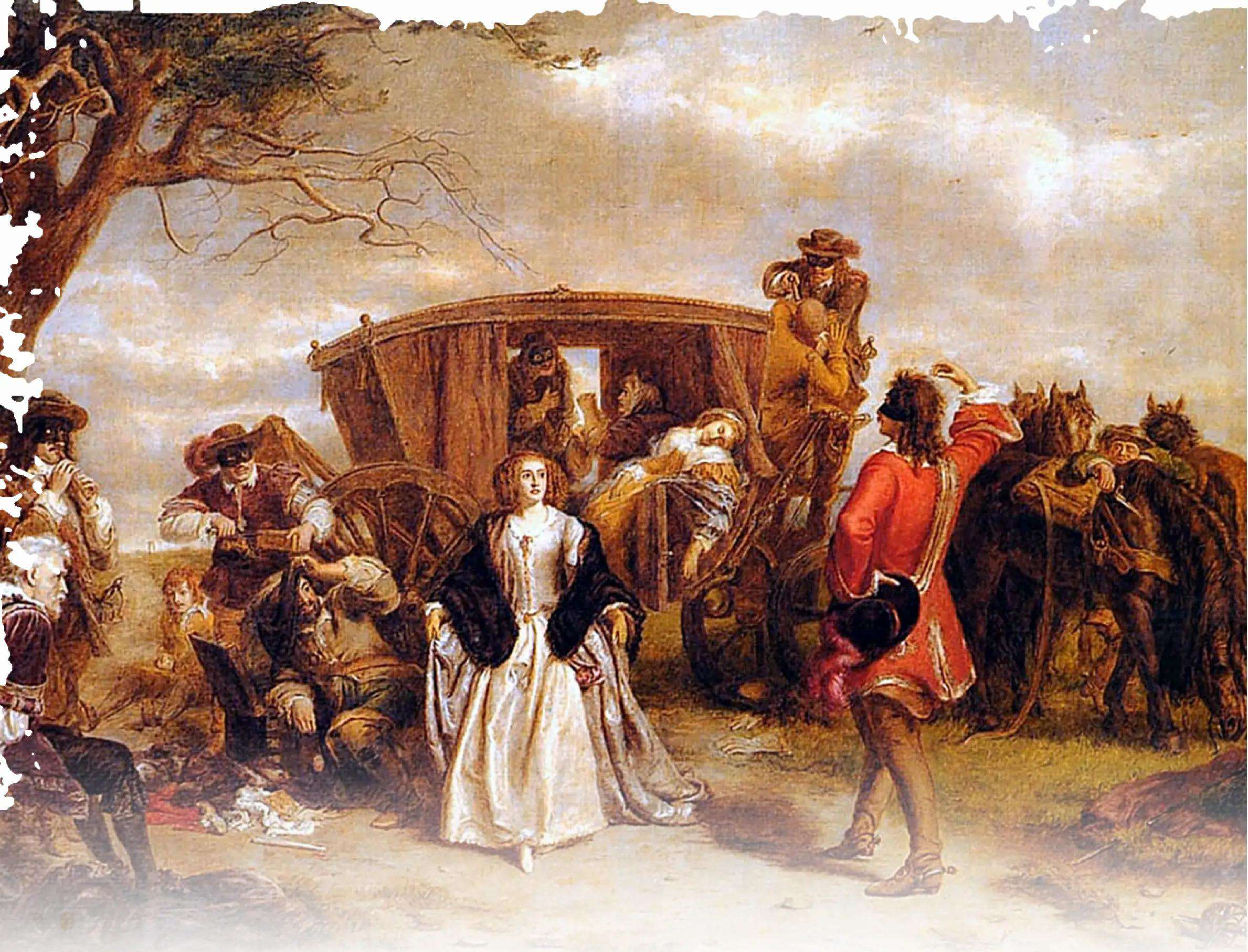
The Serpentine was once several smaller ponds that were joined together following the redevelopment of Hyde Park

The Serpentine
A SNAKING LAKE

This large Georgian lake is celebrated as a recreational site and celebrated example of landscape design

The Serpentine is Hyde Park's striking lake, and one beloved by wild swimmers and boaters. Today, it is a popular community hub, hosts a 91m (100yd) race every Christmas Day and was even used for multiple events at the 2012 Olympics. However, for all of its uses today, the Serpentine has some decidedly dark elements to its history.

The lake is not a natural feature, but was created in 1730 upon the order of Queen Caroline, wife of King George II. By the 19th century, water was fed from the Thames itself, rather than local rivers and brooks, and the lake became a popular feature in the famous 1851 Great Exhibition, but also gained fame by other means. In 1816, Harriet Westbrook, the poorly-treated first wife of poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, took her own life in the Serpentine. The lake quickly became associated with tragic suicides, particularly those of young women in tragic romantic circumstances. The lake is even said to be haunted by one such woman who took her life in the Serpentine; an enduring tale, several people have reported seeing her haunting the area. In the 1880s, the bodies of a man and woman tied together by the wrist were discovered by authorities, who suggested a link with the ongoing Jack the Ripper investigations. While bodies are still sadly found within the lake, the Serpentine remains a popular focal point of city living, used as a space for celebration, protest, and recreation.



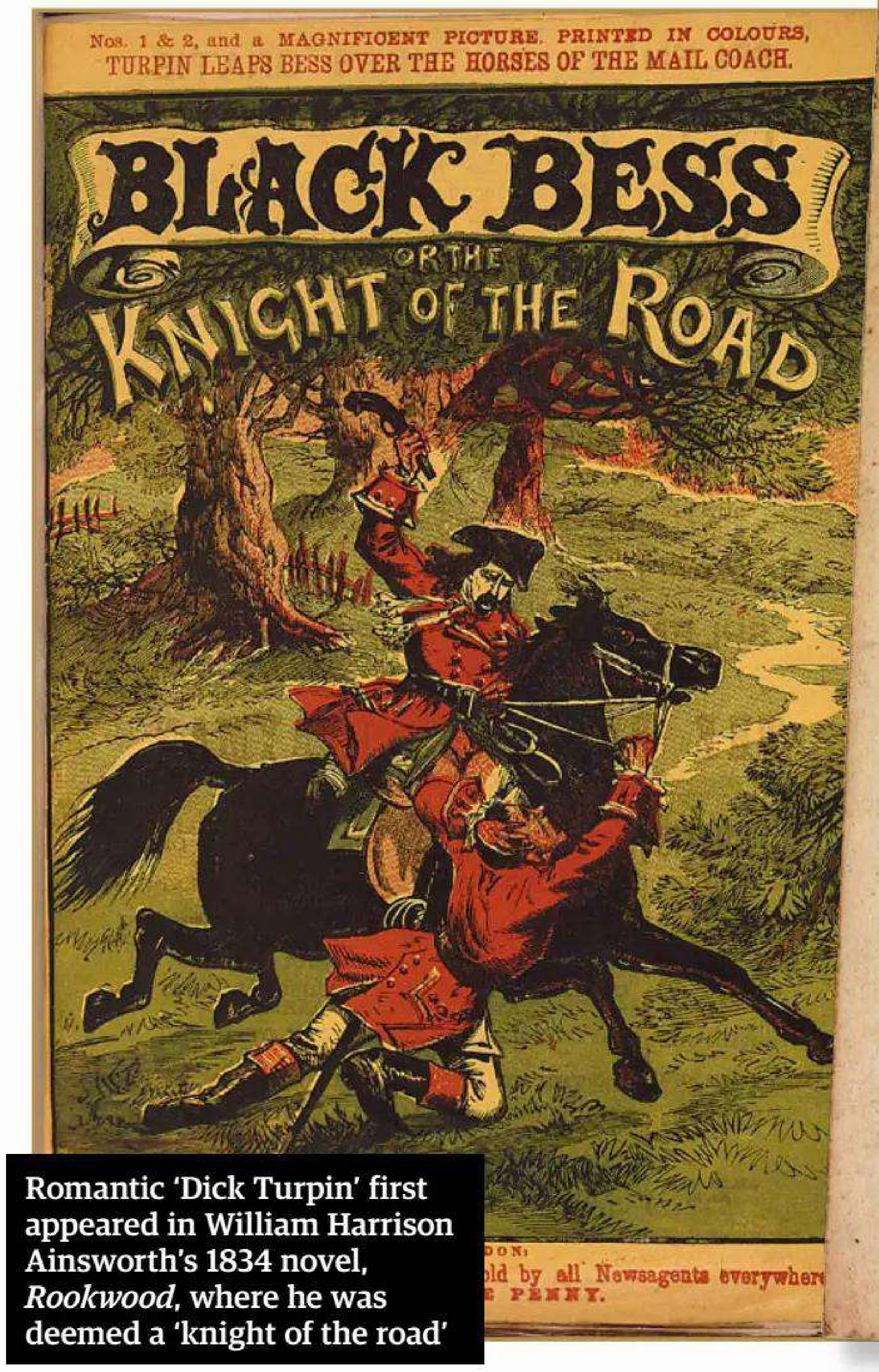
STAND AND DELIVER!

The romantic image of dashing Dick Turpin on horseback doesn't stand up to the cold and terrifying reality of highwaymen and their crimes

Highwaymen were reimagined during the Victorian era's romanticisation of the past, as tales of violent criminals were re-written as sympathetic heroes in the vein of Robin Hood. The familiar call of 'your money or your life!' is more associated with pantomime than genuine thuggery, but highway robbery often had bloody consequences.

The figure of Dick Turpin is synonymous with the world of highwaymen, thanks to the later fictional tales of 19th-century authors, who spun thrilling tales of daring deeds, as Dick raced across the country on his beloved horse, Black Bess. In reality, Richard 'Dick' Turpin was an Essex butcher-turned violent criminal, whose acts of gang violence ranged from poaching and livestock theft to burglary and even murder. After killing a man in Epping forest, Turpin had a £200 bounty on his head and fled to Yorkshire, where he continued his life of crime with a series of burglaries and horse theft. Shortly thereafter, Turpin was captured and imprisoned at York Castle, where he was sentenced to death. Turpin's demise was not a grand one, but a death befitting a criminal of the time, as he was hanged in 1739 aged just 34.

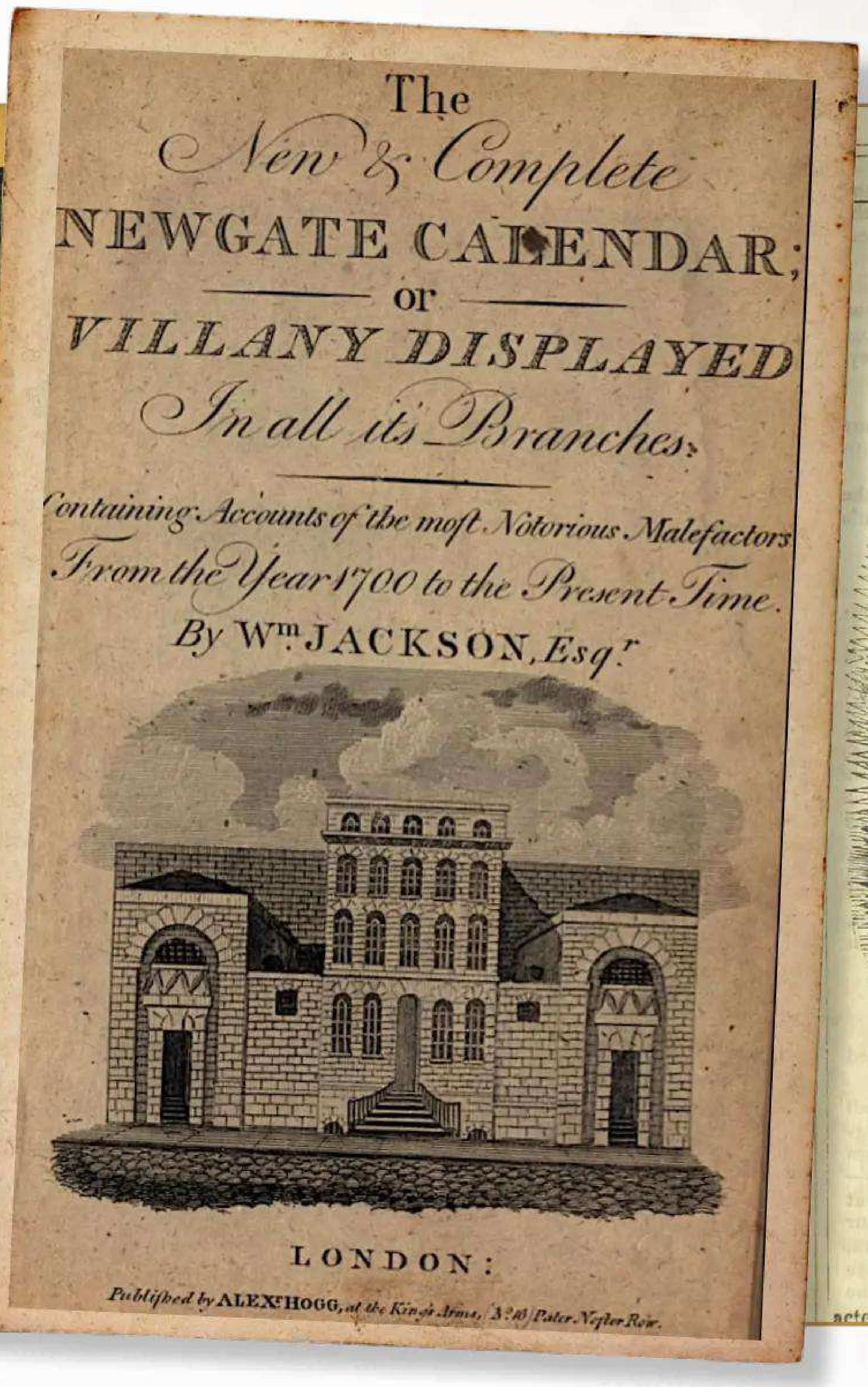
While Turpin's crimes were great, many other petty criminals of this era met a similar grim fate owing to a system known as the 'Bloody Code'. Introduced in 1723, the Bloody Code imposed the death penalty for over 200 offences, most of which were rural crimes, and many of which were really rather trivial. As such, individuals could hang for acts as unremarkable as stealing from a rabbit warren or cutting down trees. This 'Code' of capital offences was introduced as an emergency measure aimed at combating the increase in crimes within Royal Forests, the likes of which were often perpetuated by



Nos. 1 & 2, and a MAGNIFICENT PICTURE, PRINTED IN COLOURS,
TURPIN LEAPS BESS OVER THE HORSES OF THE MAIL COACH.

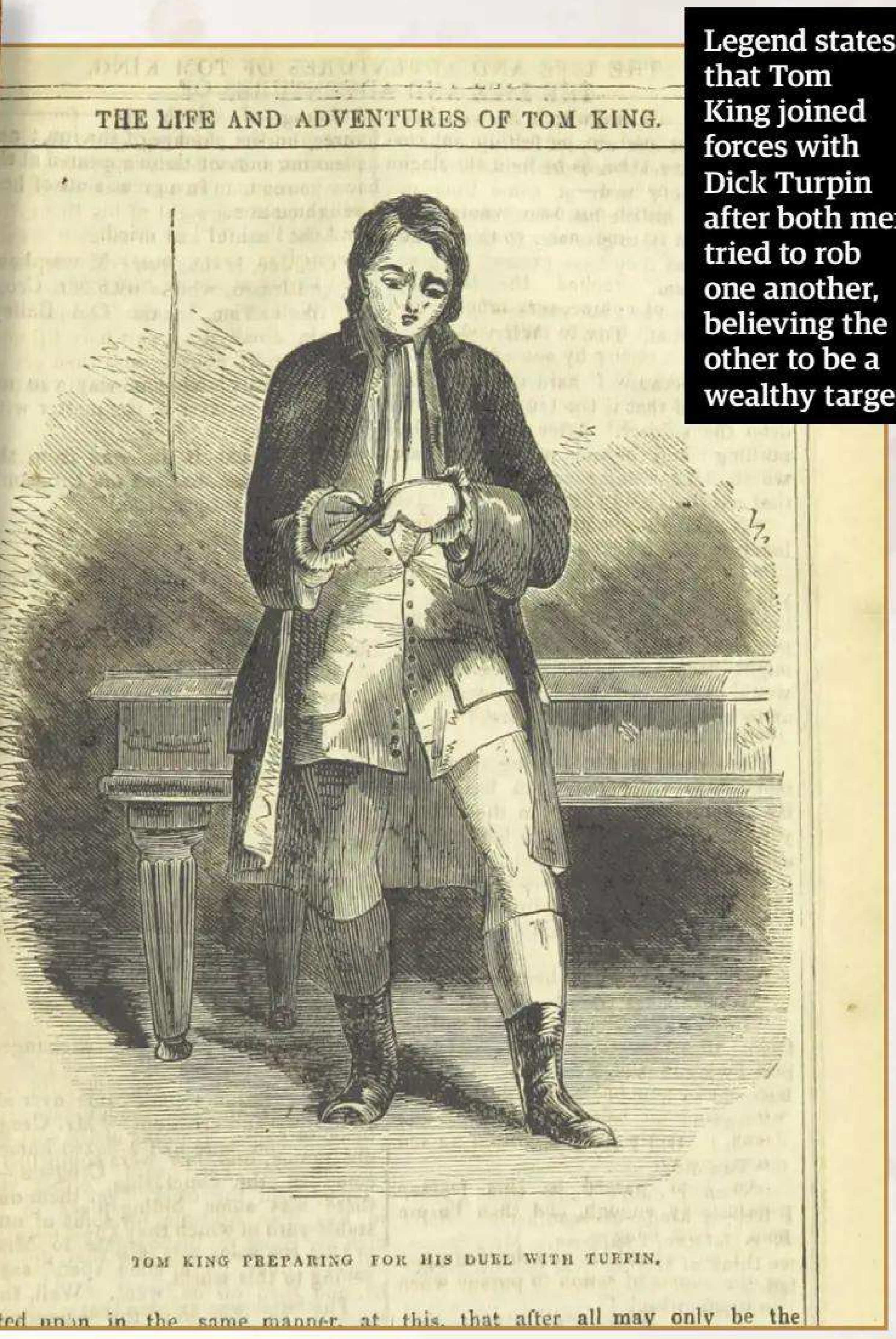
BLACK BESS
OR THE
KNIGHT OF THE ROAD

Romantic 'Dick Turpin' first appeared in William Harrison Ainsworth's 1834 novel, *Rookwood*, where he was deemed a 'knight of the road'



The
New & Complete
NEWGATE CALENDAR;
or
VILLANY DISPLAYED
In all its Branches:
Containing Accounts of the moſt Notorious Malefactors
From the Year 1700 to the Present Time.
By Wm. JACKSON, Esqr.

LONDON:
Publiſhed by ALEXr. HOGG, at the Kings Arms, No. 16 Pater Noſter Row.



THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF TOM KING.

TOM KING PREPARING FOR HIS DUEL WITH TURPIN.

acted upon in the same manner, at this, that after all may only be the

Legend states that Tom King joined forces with Dick Turpin after both men tried to rob one another, believing the other to be a wealthy target

highwaymen and poachers, who relied on tree cover and ambush to conduct their dastardly deeds. In elevating the crimes of petty thieves and highwaymen to those of murderers and hardened criminals, the act was intended as a public deterrent, yet its efficacy is debated by historians to this day.

Epping Forest was a familiar haunt for many highwaymen, as the dense woodland became a prime hunting ground for those wanting to target the wealthy people heading to the races, whose carriages travelled through the forest between Newmarket and London. While Epping Forest is the largest in London, what remains today is a mere shadow of its former glory, as the dense woodland was once part of the 'Forest of Essex', which covered much of the county and was alive with herds of deer and wild game. With such a varied landscape of rocky outcrops and ponds, countless legends have emerged around the site, with many linked to the exploits of highwaymen. Dick Turpin's presence in the forest is unavoidable, with an area deemed to be the former location of 'Turpin's Cave'; a former hideout for Dick and his fellow highwayman accomplice, 'Captain' Tom King. Between the pair of them, they quickly made Epping Forest a no-go area after dark, as they attacked travellers and buried their spoils of gold and jewels across the forest floor.

Many pubs and former coaching inns in London pay homage to the city's history of highwaymen, with establishments such as The Spaniards Inn at Hampstead professing to have been a hideout of Dick Turpin, and now a familiar haunt in death! The Green Man at Putney has its origins in the 18th century and was said to be a popular watering hole for highwaymen, who would quench their thirst before – or after – holding bloody duels on Putney Heath. While you won't bump into a highwayman today, many historical pubs offer a connection to such terrifying days gone by.

THE WICKED LADY

Not all highwaymen were men…

Known as 'The Wicked Lady', Katherine Ferrers was a wealthy noblewoman who was the sole heir to her family's large estates in Hertfordshire, north of what is now Greater London. Married off before her 14th birthday, in April 1648, her 16-year-old husband, Thomas Fanshawe, sold off her assets. Fanshawe, a staunch Royalist, was struggling financially thanks to the establishment of Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth. Ruined aristocrats turned to highway robbery during this time, but it was highly unusual for their wives to!

According to legend, Katherine would sneak out of her mansion to rob her contemporaries as they passed by, travelling to and from London, with aid from a local farmer, Ralph Chaplin.

Katherine's mysterious death at 26 fuelled rumours of her highwaywoman persona. It is claimed she was found covered in blood and wearing men's clothing in a secret staircase of a manor house. Some believe she was shot by a rival highwayman and died trying to return home. However, there is proof that she was lodging in London during the celebrations for King Charles's return mere weeks prior to her death, leading others to speculate that she actually lost her life following a miscarriage.

Whether or not the tales of her life are myth, in death she has become a legend. Her ghost is said to still haunt the Hertfordshire countryside, a local rhyme queries the location of her final loot and a Hertfordshire pub is named in her honour.

THE WICKED LADY
COUNTRY PUB • EATING HOUSE

BEHIND THE BARS OF NEWGATE

NEWGATE STREET
OLD BAILEY

Both notorious and feared, the infamous scaffold and glowering walls of Newgate Prison enjoy a grisly place in the annals of execution history

Standing at the corner of Newgate Street and Old Bailey, Newgate Prison was a watchword for punishment for more than 700 years.

In 1188, a prison opened at Newgate to house prisoners who were waiting for royal judges to decide whether they were innocent or guilty. It stood at the site of a gate in the Roman London Wall, a witness to history. Within 40 years, the prison was straining at the seams, so one of the Newgate turrets that still stood as a gate into London was repurposed as an extension of the heaving prison.

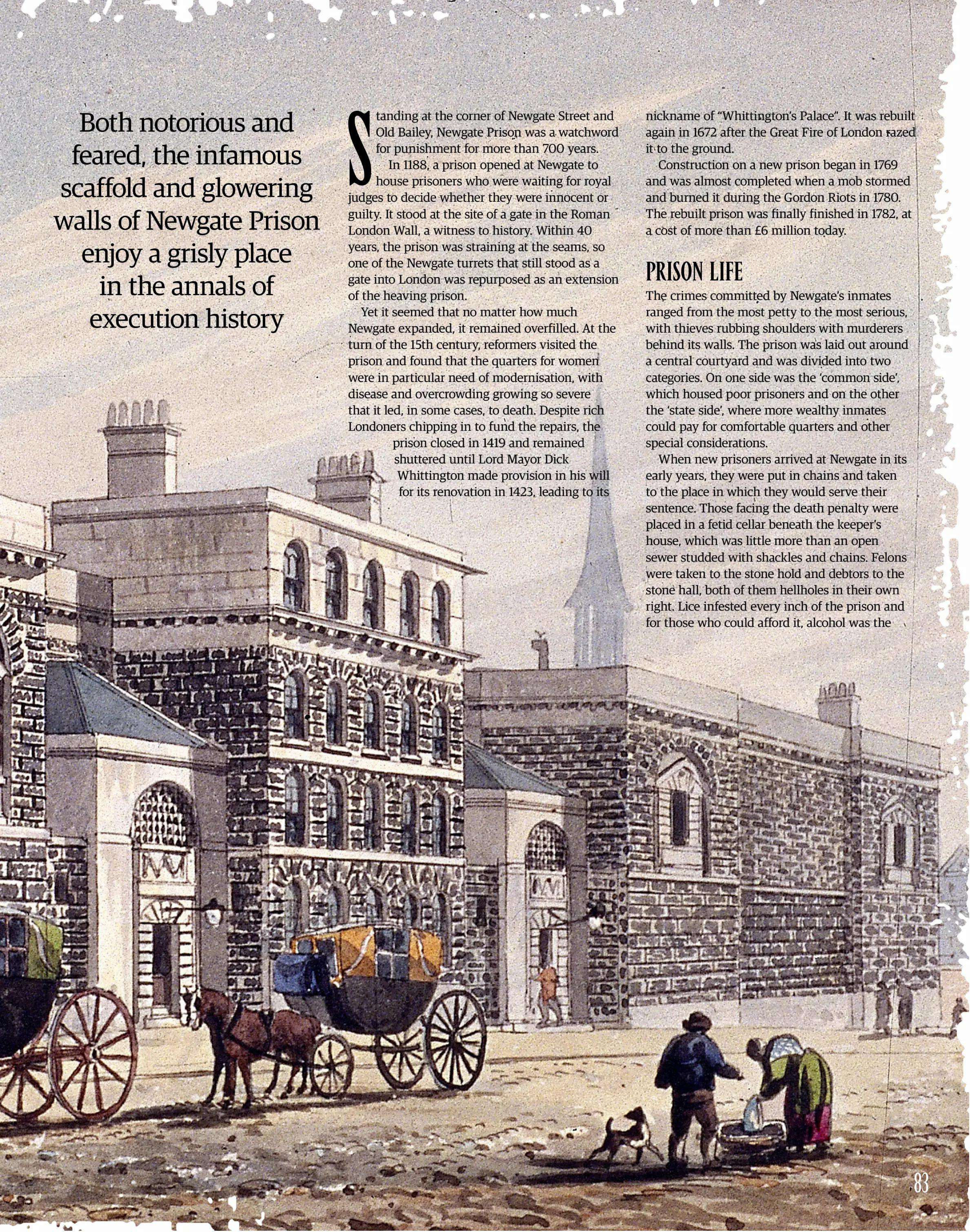
Yet it seemed that no matter how much Newgate expanded, it remained overfilled. At the turn of the 15th century, reformers visited the prison and found that the quarters for women were in particular need of modernisation, with disease and overcrowding growing so severe that it led, in some cases, to death. Despite rich Londoners chipping in to fund the repairs, the prison closed in 1419 and remained shuttered until Lord Mayor Dick Whittington made provision in his will for its renovation in 1423, leading to its nickname of "Whittington's Palace". It was rebuilt again in 1672 after the Great Fire of London razed it to the ground.

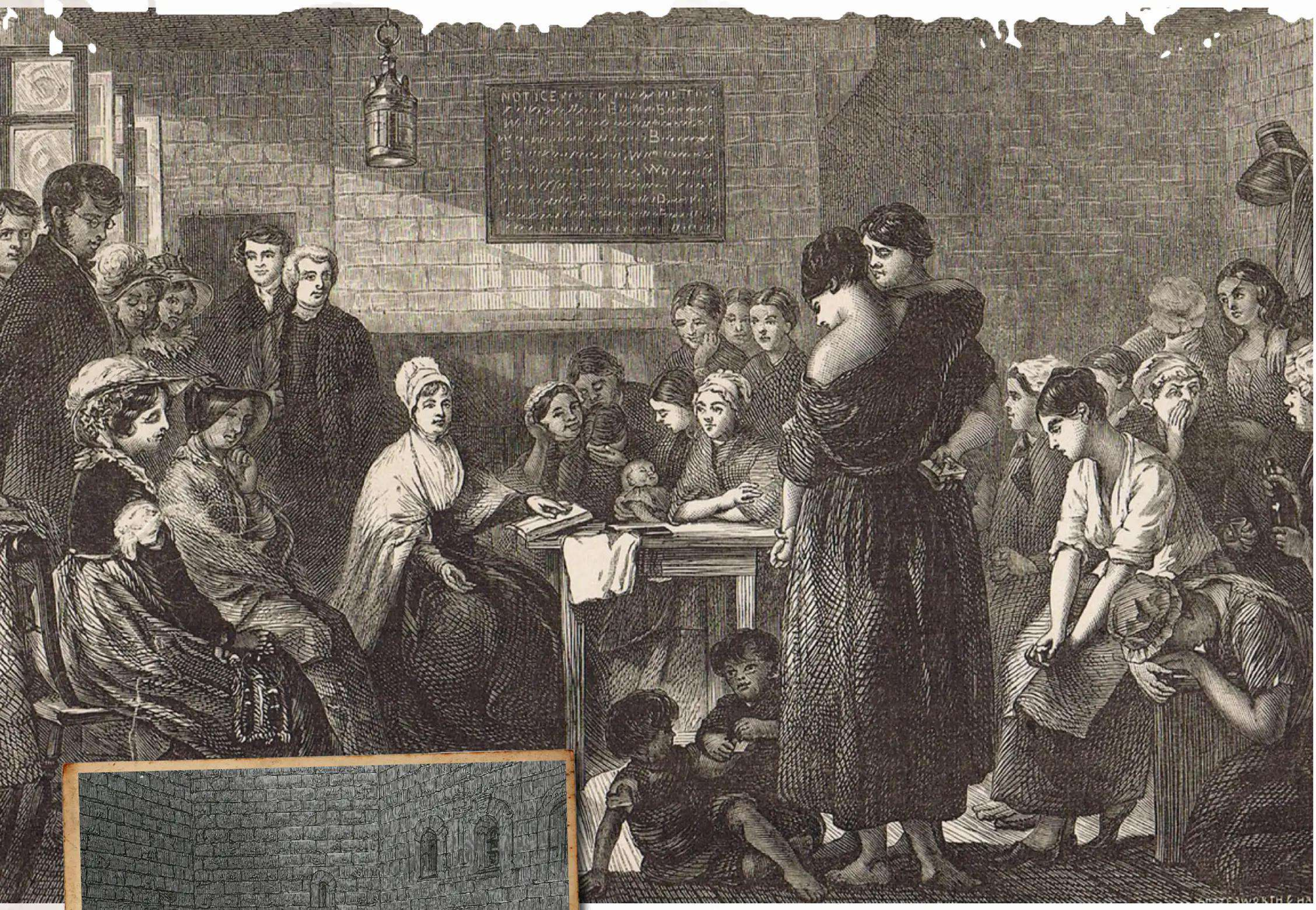
Construction on a new prison began in 1769 and was almost completed when a mob stormed and burned it during the Gordon Riots in 1780. The rebuilt prison was finally finished in 1782, at a cost of more than £6 million today.

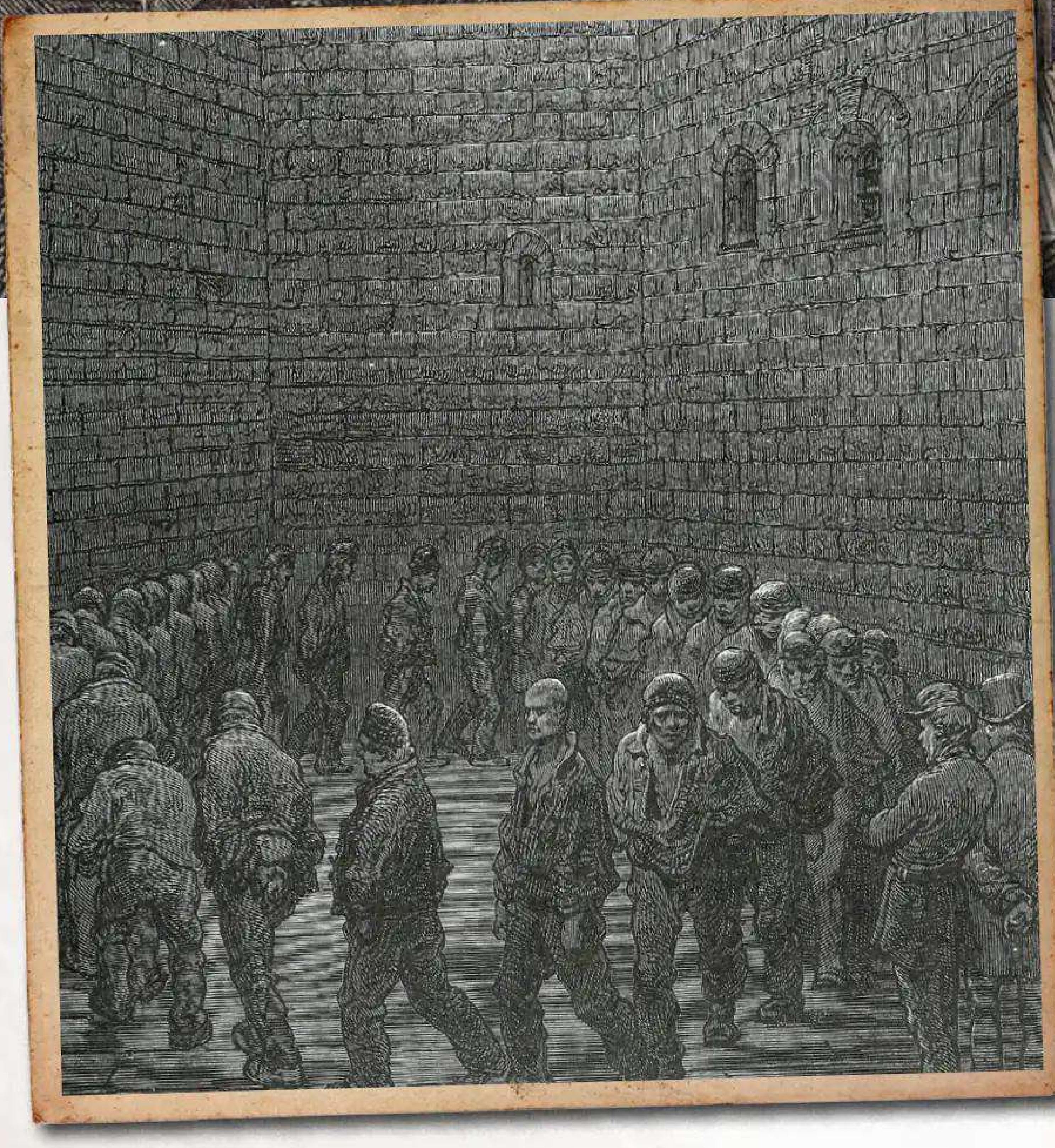
PRISON LIFE

The crimes committed by Newgate's inmates ranged from the most petty to the most serious, with thieves rubbing shoulders with murderers behind its walls. The prison was laid out around a central courtyard and was divided into two categories. On one side was the 'common side', which housed poor prisoners and on the other the 'state side', where more wealthy inmates could pay for comfortable quarters and other special considerations.

When new prisoners arrived at Newgate in its early years, they were put in chains and taken to the place in which they would serve their sentence. Those facing the death penalty were placed in a fetid cellar beneath the keeper's house, which was little more than an open sewer studded with shackles and chains. Felons were taken to the stone hold and debtors to the stone hall, both of them hellholes in their own right. Lice infested every inch of the prison and for those who could afford it, alcohol was the







only respite from the terrible conditions of the unlit dungeons where they were serving out their time.

During the medieval era, the prison was run by two elected sheriffs, who sublet the administration of the institution to paying gaolers. These gaolers then took payments directly from the inmates, growing wealthy on the profits they made by charging for everything imaginable. Prisoners who couldn't afford to pay to have their manacles removed were left in chains, while basics such as food and meagre bedlinen had to be paid for too. Many guards were involved in corruption, blackmailing and ill-treating the prisoners in their care, despite being subject to rules that were supposed to safeguard against such dishonesty.

"Many guards were involved in corruption, blackmailing and ill-treating prisoners in their care"

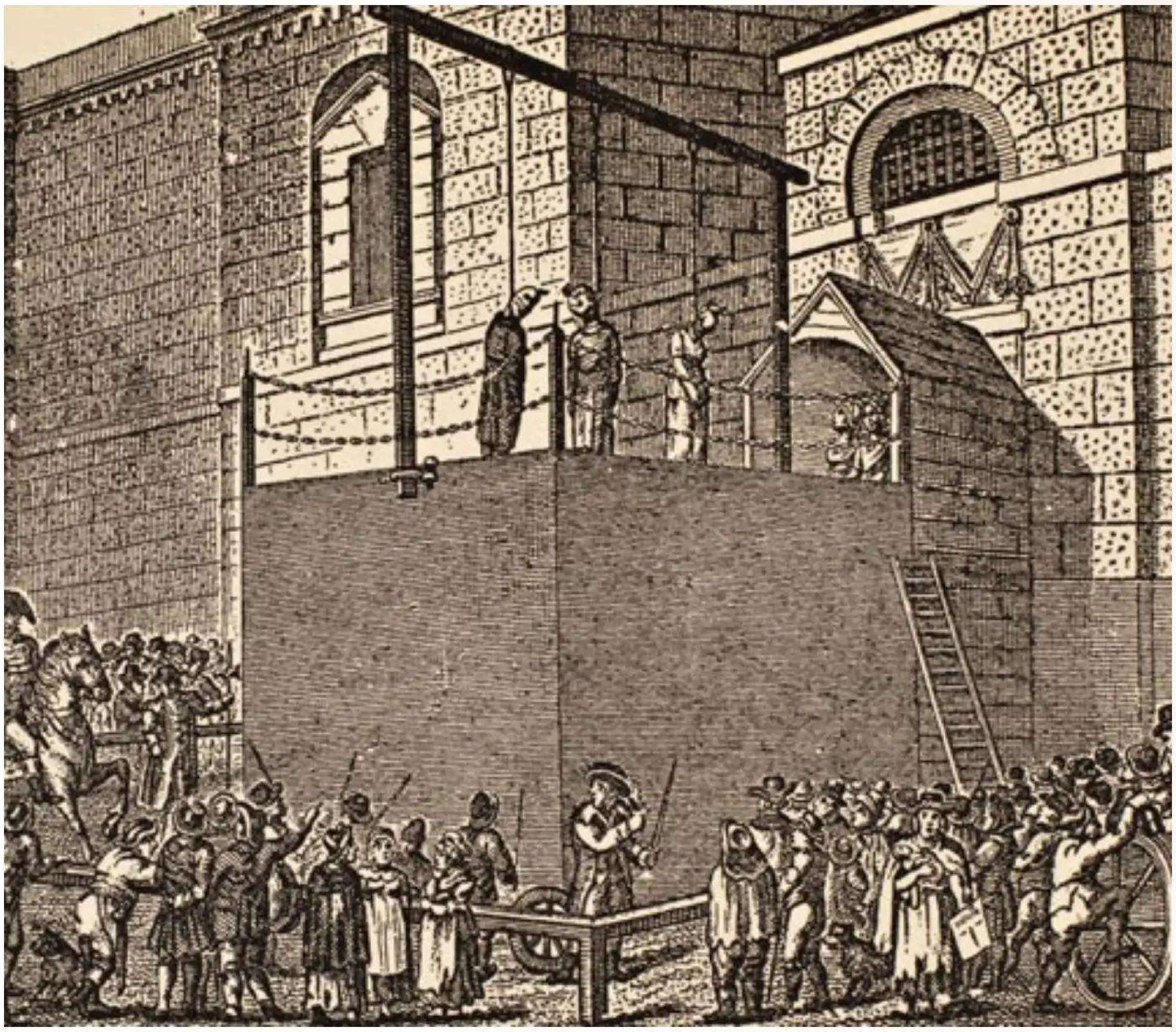
PUNISHMENT

The punishments doled out to the unfortunate inmates at Newgate were humiliating and often agonising. For some who were sentenced to death, it was possible to avoid the hangman's noose by pleading for the benefit of clergy. In order to do this, they were required to read a passage from the bible; so popular was the 51st Psalm, that it became known as the Neck Verse. Until 1779, those who successfully made the plea were instead branded on their thumb, while others were sentenced to additional hard labour or transportation.

Branding was also used for those convicted of manslaughter, and letters denoted the crime committed, with F for felon, T for thief, for example. In the early years of the 18th century, the branding was done on the cheek in order to act as a visible deterrent. However, convicts who bore this branding found it impossible to get work, so often turned back to their life of crime.

The pillory awaited those found guilty of crimes such as fraud, sedition and sodomy. These convicts were placed in the pillory in a public setting, with their hands and head held in place by holes in the wooden frame. Crowds gathered to scream abuse or throw rotten eggs, dung and other missiles. However, sometimes the crowd turned out in support of the person in the pillory and hurled flowers instead; this was the fate that met Daniel Defoe in 1703.

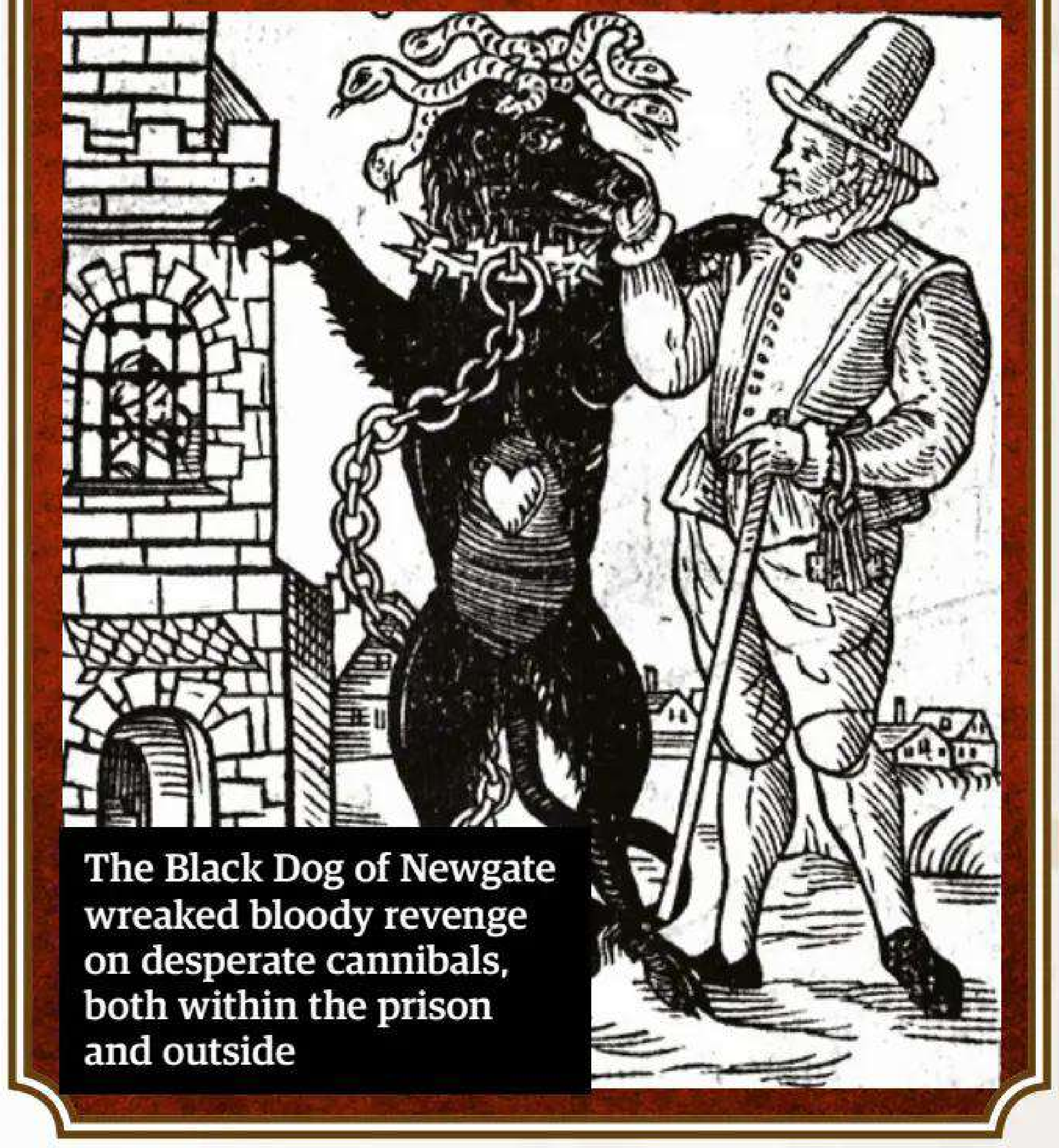
Whipping was usually reserved for those convicted of theft. While this could be done in private, more usually it was a public punishment, with the convict stripped to the waist and flogged along the length of a street until their back was bloody. Once again, the emphasis was on not only physical punishment, but shame and humiliation, with crowds turning out to watch floggings with undisguised enthusiasm.



THE BLACK DOG OF NEWGATE

According to legend, a fearsome spectral hound still prowls the site of Newgate Prison

In 1596, a Newgate inmate named Luke Hutton wrote down a story of a 13th-century famine that gripped the jail. So hungry were the prisoners in Newgate, said Hutton, that they were forced to resort to cannibalism in order to stave off starvation. They chose for their meal a sorcerer and warlock and, not long afterwards, began to be tormented by a terrifying black dog. This spectral beast, reputedly the reincarnation of the warlock's spirit, killed those who had committed the murder one by one, pursuing some who escaped the prison to tear them limb from limb. Its ghastly work finished, the dog returned to Newgate, where it can still occasionally be glimpsed to this very day.



The Black Dog of Newgate wreaked bloody revenge on desperate cannibals, both within the prison and outside

For those sentenced to prison, hard labour or the treadmill might be in store. Hard labour was intended as a deterrent to those outside of prison while for those enduring the sentence, it was supposed to teach them the value of hard work. Often this sentence meant dredging the Thames, working a water pump or breaking rocks. The treadmill, meanwhile, was a huge wheel in which the prisoners had to walk for long, punishing hours. Sometimes the wheel ground corn or served as a waterwheel, but sometimes it served absolutely no purpose whatsoever.

Transportation was another option open to judges when they passed sentences. First introduced in the 17th century, this meant that criminals were taken out of England and sent far, far away. Any number of offences could result in transportation, from theft to murder, as it became increasingly used as an alternative to the death penalty. When the option to transport felons to America ended with Great Britain's defeat in the American War of Independence, they were instead sent to Australia, where they established their own colonies and settlements.

DEATH

Under what became known as the 'Bloody Code', more than 200 crimes were punishable by death. The most famous manner in which this was carried out at Newgate was by hanging, when Tyburn's infamous gallows were retired in favour of those at the prison. Public executions held outside the prison walls attracted enormous audiences and if someone was able to obtain a permit from the Lord Mayor, they could even visit the men in their condemned cells as they awaited their date with the hangman.

For women found guilty of treason, burning at the stake was an option until its abolition in 1790. Men found guilty of treason, however, were sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered, by which they would be hanged until nearly dead, then cut down, disembowelled, castrated, beheaded and quartered.

FAMOUS NAMES

Among those incarcerated at Newgate were famous names including John Bellingham, so far the only person to assassinate a British prime minister; the legendary lover Casanova, imprisoned for bigamy; and William Kidd, better known to history as pirate Captain Kidd. In 1862, suspected serial killer and Newgate inmate Catherine Wilson became the last woman to be publicly hanged in Britain.

REFORM AND CLOSURE

Newgate underwent many reforms over its long, dark history. Most famously, it was a special focus of social reformer Elizabeth Fry, who was horrified by the conditions in which female prisoners and their children were kept, often without trial. After bringing food and clothes for the prisoners, Fry worked to establish a prison school for the children and included the mothers in her decisions, asking them to vote on rules and procedures. She was an instrumental part of the Association for the Reformation of the Female Prisoners, which aimed to teach the women skills that could earn them money upon their release.

Fry gave evidence about the conditions in Newgate to the House of Commons and played a part in the passing of the Prisons Act 1835, which finally established central control of the penal system and a programme of inspection.

Newgate closed its doors in 1902. Today the Old Bailey can be found on the site where the prison once stood. The prison's execution bell, which sounded 12 times on the stroke of midnight on the day that an execution was due to be carried out, now rests in St Sepulchre, its feared death knell silent at last.

© Getty Images, Alamy

VICTORIAN CRIME

While overseas the British Empire was flourishing, in London, the city of fog, a grisly war was waging between the emerging criminal class and a fledging police force

As Queen Victoria ascended to power, England's influence over the world spread like a blot of spilt ink, and this dark mark seeped into the houses and alleyways of the country's overpopulated cities. Executions of dastardly criminals drew increasing crowds and headlines warned of the crime wave washing over the country. Thieves lingered in shaded alleys, there were violent acts of garrotting against the rich and influential, and a well-dressed man who killed for fun was known only by his eerie nickname, Jack the Ripper.

The industrial revolution with its smoke-spewing factories created a buzz of excitement in London and other larger cities, but life was not so full of opportunities for the lower-class workers. As more families flooded into the cramped cities, poverty thrived. It was soon followed by its frequent bedfellow, crime.

Rookeries sprung up around London – nests of winding alleys, dead ends and shadowed corners where thieves, prostitutes and cheats could scheme and fester. They were a den of gloomy places for criminals to hide, and a twisted maze in which to lose the police. One of the central breeding grounds for this new and dangerous class was the neighbourhood of Whitechapel, along with the surrounding areas of Bethnal Green, Wapping and Mile End, not to forget the ever-growing slums of Spitalfields. These run-down and over-populated places became cut off from the rest of the city, and crime flourished.

Children born in these dens of decay had little hope of leading an honest life, else face the cruel and dangerous conditions of the workhouse. Better to take a chance on the short and fast life of a criminal than the inevitable poverty that hung all around them like the thick black smoke that covered the city. Until 1870 there was no compulsory education, so orphaned, abandoned or poverty-stricken youngsters gained a very different set of skills on the streets.

As they grew up, the street urchins outgrew the silken handkerchiefs and measly rewards at the mercy of their masters. The common path for the older pickpocket was to join the swell mob. These older, experienced crooks were debonair criminals who earned the trust of their victims before bleeding them dry.

On paper, it seemed Victorian London was the safest period in the city's history, but in reality a lack of faith in the police left many crimes unreported, and all peace-loving citizens knew to keep their wits about them, else they'd leave certain areas significantly lighter than they entered them.

During Queen Victoria's reign London's crime rate soared

CRIMINAL SLANG

A guide to the popular slang terms of Victorian London

AREA-SNEAK: Opportunistic burglar

BEARER UP: Someone who uses a female accomplice to distract men while they rob them

BLUE BOTTLE: Policemen

BONNETING: Tipping a man's hat over his head to make him easier to mug

BROADSMAN: A cardsharp

BUG-HUNTERS: People who rob drunks, usually at night

BUTTONER: A sharper's assistant, usually entices the targets

CRACKSMAN: A burglar or safecracker, a thief who breaks locks

DRAGSMAN: A thief who targets occupants of carriages

FLASH HOUSE: A public house that serves as the hangout of criminals

GONOPHS: Child thieves

HOISTERS: Shoplifters

KIDSMAN: Someone in charge of a troupe of child thieves

MAGSMAN: Confidence tricksters, usually inferior

MALTOOLER: A pickpocket who steals from those riding the omnibus

PRIG: A thief

RAMPSMEN: A hoodlum

ROOKERY: A slum

SHARPER: A swindler, usually involved in rigged card games

SMASHERS/SHOFULMEN: Counterfeiters

SMATTER Hauling: stealing handkerchiefs from men

SPEELERS: Gamblers

SWELL MOB: Elite pickpockets, usually well dressed and appearing respectable

THE FAMILY: The criminal underworld

THIMBLE-RIGGER: A con man who dupes people with the shell game - where an item is hidden under one of three cups

On 20 July 1829, Peel approved the establishment of a force of 895 constables, 88 sergeants, 20 inspectors and eight superintendents

BIRTH OF THE METROPOLITAN POLICE

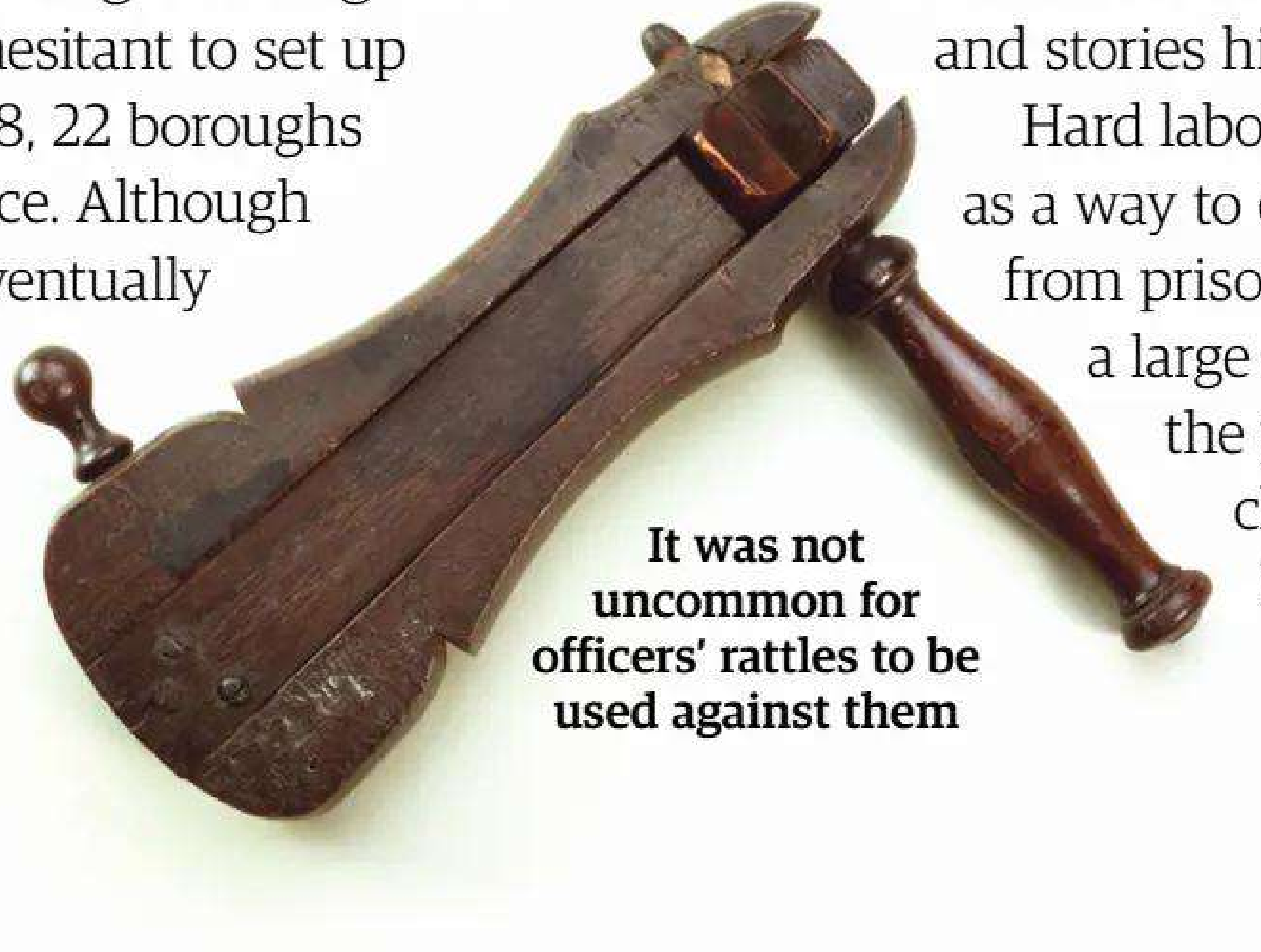
As crime became organised and social disorder grew, it put an immense strain on the dated Tudor system of policing. Prior to the Metropolitan Police Act introduced by home secretary Robert Peel in 1829, small parishes and market towns only had a constable and the local watch and ward to maintain order. Meanwhile, in London, the bow street runners, part publicly funded detectives, became the first incarnation of what is known today as a professional police force. When Peel's Metropolitan Police Force took to the streets of London in 1829, it was to a city very much in need of law and order.

1,000 new policemen were hired to supplement the existing 400. They were given weekly pay and distinctive bottle-blue uniforms; policing became a full-time profession with one central goal – the detection and prevention of crime. The force was specially designed to represent a neutral good – they were distanced from the military and were armed only with a truncheon and rattle (though some did later carry flintlock pistols). Despite Peel's best efforts, the police were initially not well liked. Many citizens saw them as a threat to civil liberties and they earned unfavourable nicknames such as 'blue devils' and 'Peel's bloody gang'. Regardless of their focus being to prevent disorder, many policemen were attacked, impaled, blinded and even killed. Even with the thorough selection process wannabe officers underwent, many of them were arrested for being drunk on duty, while others were found guilty of corruption. The very first policeman, given the number one, was sacked after just four hours on the job for drunkenness.

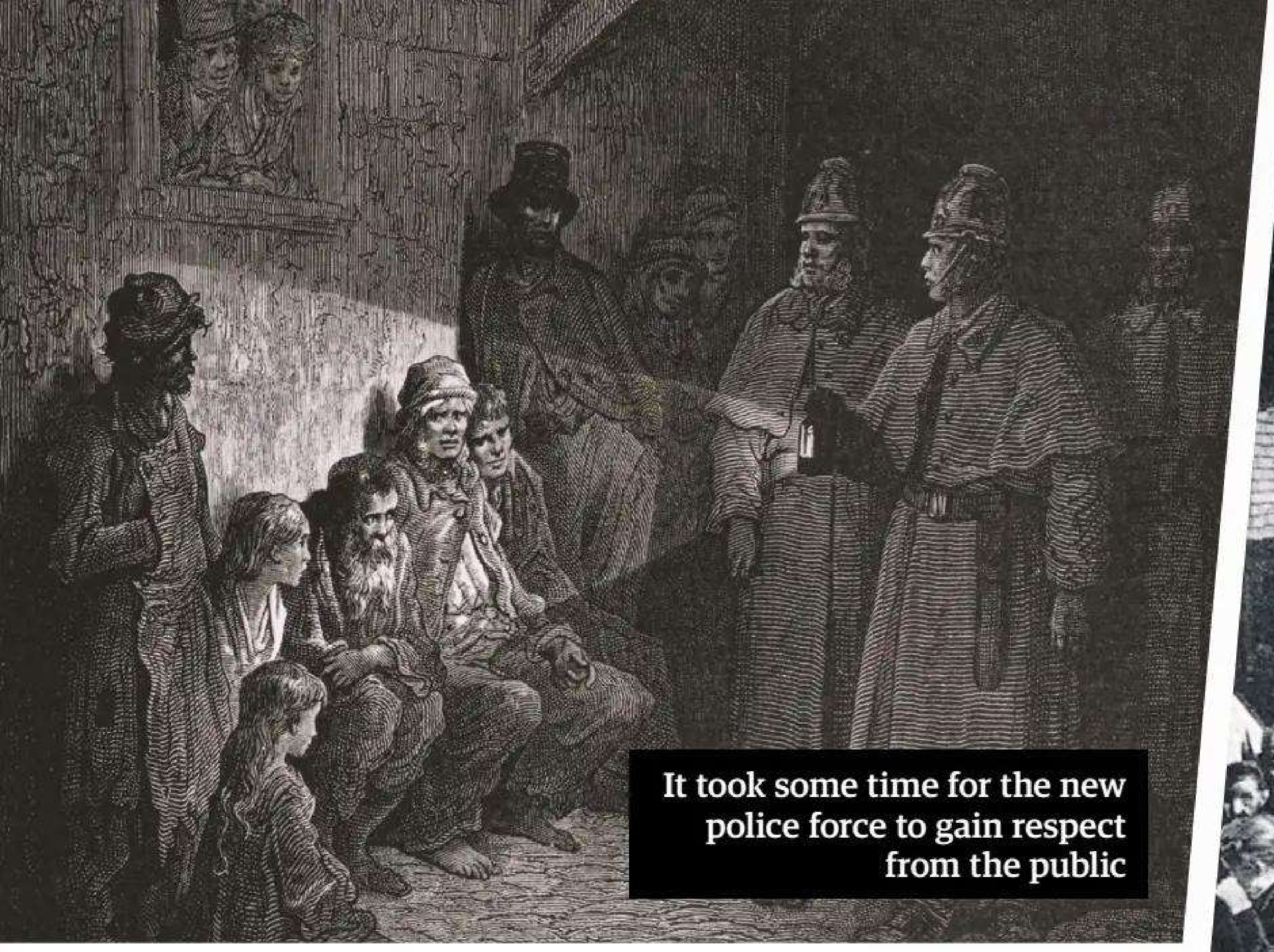
Despite the negative public reaction, the preventative measures used by the police were successful and crime did appear to decline. It is certain that the presence of police dissuaded criminals, but often this merely pushed them into the areas of London where the police did not operate. Wandsworth attracted so many criminals eager to escape the law that it became known as 'Black Wandsworth'. Many boroughs in England and Wales as a whole were hesitant to set up their own forces, and by 1848, 22 boroughs still had no official police force. Although implementation was slow, eventually police forces spread across the country, and in 1856, 73,240 people were arrested in London alone.

For those found guilty, a combination of backbreaking work and mind-numbing monotony awaited in the gaols. The Victorian era was a time of dramatic change in the prison system and new techniques were being employed across the country. Hulks – old sailing ships originally used to hold prisoners to be transported – were increasingly used to house ordinary prisoners. Conditions on the hulks were horrific and cholera was rife as filthy polluted water from the Thames was used for washing and drinking. Techniques of isolation and segregation were employed to encourage reflection. At Pentonville Prison (dubbed a 'convict academy'), prisoners were stripped of their names and referred to by their cell numbers on a brass badge pinned to their chest. They wore a brown cloth cap with a mask that covered their faces – their voices and stories hidden from the world.

Hard labour was first employed as a way to encourage productivity from prisoners, with the treadmill, a large cylinder with steps that the prisoners monotonously climbed for up to eight hours a day, producing



It was not uncommon for officers' rattles to be used against them



It took some time for the new police force to gain respect from the public

For many, the dangers of a life of crime were preferable to being sent to the workhouse

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

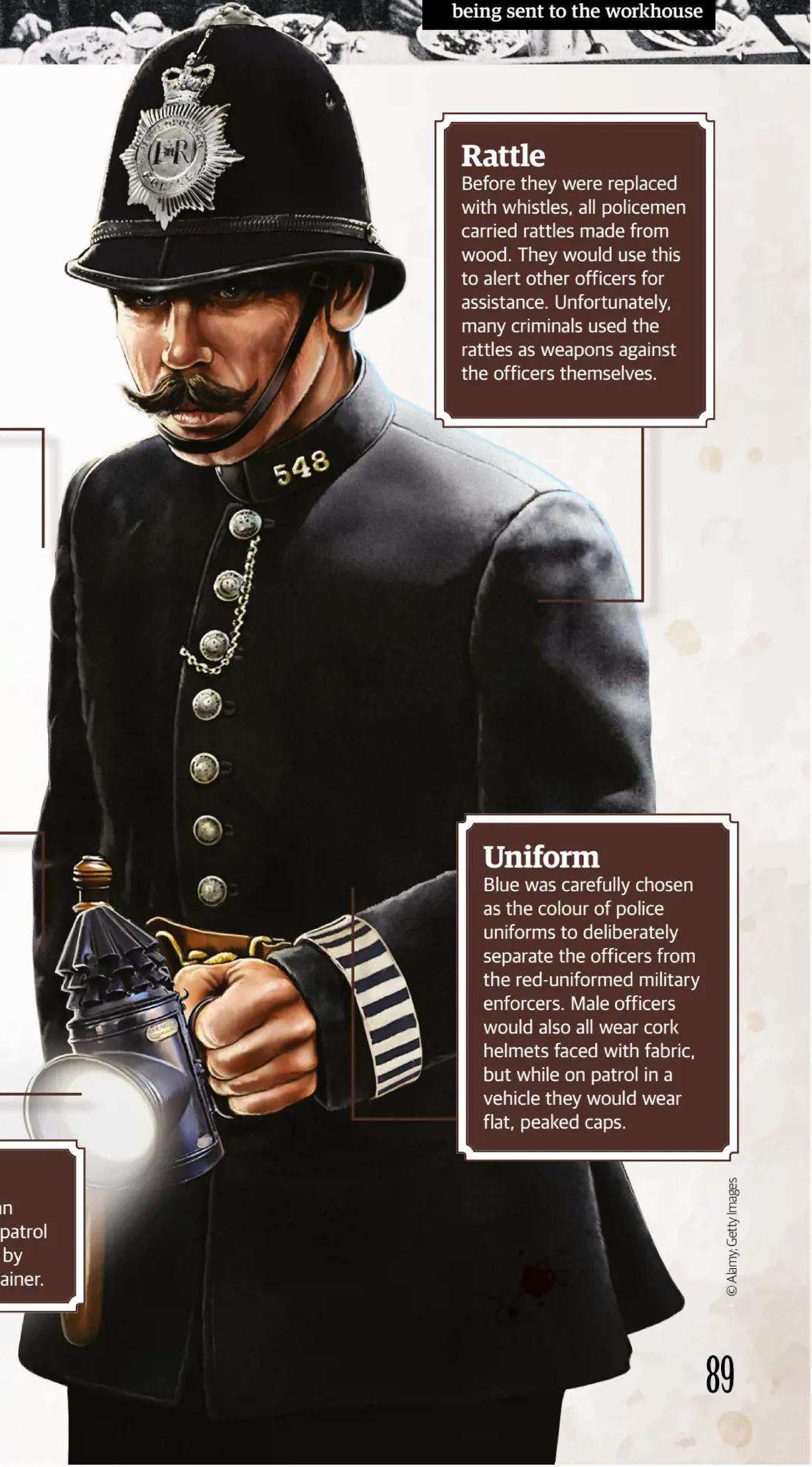
ARSON	15 years' transportation
ABANDONING FAMILY	21 days' hard labour
STEALING ONIONS	7 years' penal servitude
BEGGING	21 days' hard labour
MURDER	Hanged from the neck until dead
ASSAULT	21 days' imprisonment
TRESPASSING	1 month's hard labour/fined 27 shillings
STEALING A WAISTCOAT	6 months' hard labour

flour for the prison to sell. However, in the later part of the 19th century, there was no end product for this back-breaking task and it, along with a host of other mindless exercises, was designed only to degrade and break the prisoners' spirits. The gaols wished to establish themselves as a spectre of pain and suffering to deter criminals. Because the poor outside were suffering under terrible conditions, the government were keen that the prisons represented a bleaker outlook than the workhouse.

But the cold, bare cells of the gaols were preferable to the grim image of the hangman's noose. Public hangings attracted large crowds up to the day they were outlawed. In one particularly grisly case, the condemned William Bousfield avoided execution by mounting his feet on the sides of the drop. After four more unsuccessful attempts, the hangman leapt into the pit beneath the scaffold and hung on to the prisoner's legs.

Gradually, as the century came to a close, more liberal ideas of reform began to play a part in penal policy, with doctors and psychiatrists interacting closely with prisoners. However, it would take some time for the authorities to regard criminals as more than simply an incurable social evil.

ANATOMY OF A VICTORIAN POLICEMAN



Truncheon
Early truncheons were heavily decorated and seen as proof of identification for the officers. They also featured the monarch's crown and name of the police force. Truncheons were not replaced by identifying warrant cards until the 1890s.

Handcuffs
All policemen were equipped with two pairs of 'D' cuffs, named for the shape that resembled the letter. These handcuffs came in two sizes – one designed for arresting adults, and the other in a child-friendly size for young lawbreakers.

Bull's-eye lantern
Due to the lack of streetlights on Victorian streets, officers would carry a lantern to patrol the city at night. The lantern was ignited by lighting a wick resting in an oil-filled container.

Rattle
Before they were replaced with whistles, all policemen carried rattles made from wood. They would use this to alert other officers for assistance. Unfortunately, many criminals used the rattles as weapons against the officers themselves.

Uniform
Blue was carefully chosen as the colour of police uniforms to deliberately separate the officers from the red-uniformed military enforcers. Male officers would also all wear cork helmets faced with fabric, but while on patrol in a vehicle they would wear flat, peaked caps.

© Alamy, Getty Images

JACK THE RIPPER

History's most infamous serial killer stalks the streets and the police hunt for him grows more desperate with every gruesome murder

August 31st 1888. The East End of London is not unaccustomed to violence or murders, but on Buck's Row lies a body that has been mutilated beyond even Whitechapel's reputation for depravity. Her throat cut and abdomen gashed, Mary Ann Nichols, known as Polly, has become the first unwitting victim of the modern era's most notorious serial killer.

Polly Nichols is widely considered the Ripper's first victim and shares a similar profile to most of his later victims. Estranged from her family, Nichols has worked the dark streets of Whitechapel for most of the decade. Known for her love of drink and with a turbulent personal history behind her, Polly has been in and out of London's workhouses, where the destitute are offered food and shelter in return for unskilled work, for over five years, ever since her husband ceased maintenance payments on the grounds that his wife has been working as a prostitute.

Despite finding a job working as a domestic servant during the spring of 1888, Nichols resumes her itinerant lifestyle and lives in a series of workhouses and lodging houses over the summer. On 31 August 1888, Polly has made her daily lodgings money three times over but has drunk away most of her profits, so she must go out to work again if she is to have a roof over her head for the night. She is last seen in The Frying Pan public house before heading out into the night again – minutes later her body is discovered on Buck's Row. Her throat has been cut and her abdomen slashed open. It will later be discovered in the mortuary that Polly Nichols' body has been eviscerated too.

Even before the Ripper's reign of terror, the East End was a hotbed of violence, particularly toward women. While the police will later exclude them from the so-called canonical murders – the five murders considered to have been perpetrated by the Ripper – two women working as prostitutes have already been killed in 1888. Emma Smith and Martha Tabram were both killed and mutilated that year, but with such events relatively commonplace there is little concern among the capital's police force. This will soon change.

A burly, mustachioed man, Frederick Abberline knows the streets of Whitechapel well, having worked in the Metropolitan Police force's H Division as a local inspector for almost ten years before receiving a promotion to inspector first-class at Scotland Yard in February 1888. With the resources of H Division seen as stretched and the seriousness of the Nichols murder recognised at the highest levels, Abberline is seconded back to Whitechapel to oversee the investigation into the murders due to his excellent knowledge of the area's geography, criminals and way of life. Nobody doubts Abberline's suitability for the job – he is considered fair and meticulous. With increasing

"Polly has made her daily lodgings money three times over but has drunk away most of the profits"

numbers of detectives and divisions involved in investigating the murders, Abberline becomes the most-recognised policeman connected to the Ripper murders, conducting interviews, viewing identity parades and hearing testimonies first-hand. Many high-ranking officials from Scotland Yard would compile their own theories based on Abberline's reports.

However, the police have a difficult task on their hands. The victims' profession is an unwitting assistance to the Ripper. They lead him to the shadows, where they are unlikely to be disturbed: the perfect way to commit murder in Whitechapel. With an estimated 90,000 people crammed into little more than 2.6 square kilometres (1.5 square miles) – and an estimated 1,200 women working as prostitutes at any one time – policing Whitechapel is near-impossible. This is made even harder by Victorian methods of policing, which dictate that beat constables must check in on their rounds on time or face their pay being docked: a quixotic rule that leads to some constables turning a blind eye to crime in order to check in on time. By 19 September, Abberline is forced to conclude that, "not the slightest clue can at present be obtained", as to Nichols' killer.

Just a week after the murder of Nichols, the Ripper strikes again. On 8 September 1888, the body of Annie Chapman is discovered in the yard of 29 Hanbury Street. Her throat has been cut, but the mutilations are even more horrific. Chapman's body has been disembowelled and the intestines strung over her shoulder; part of Chapman's womb has been removed. Alongside Chapman's meagre possessions there is a leather apron found nearby.

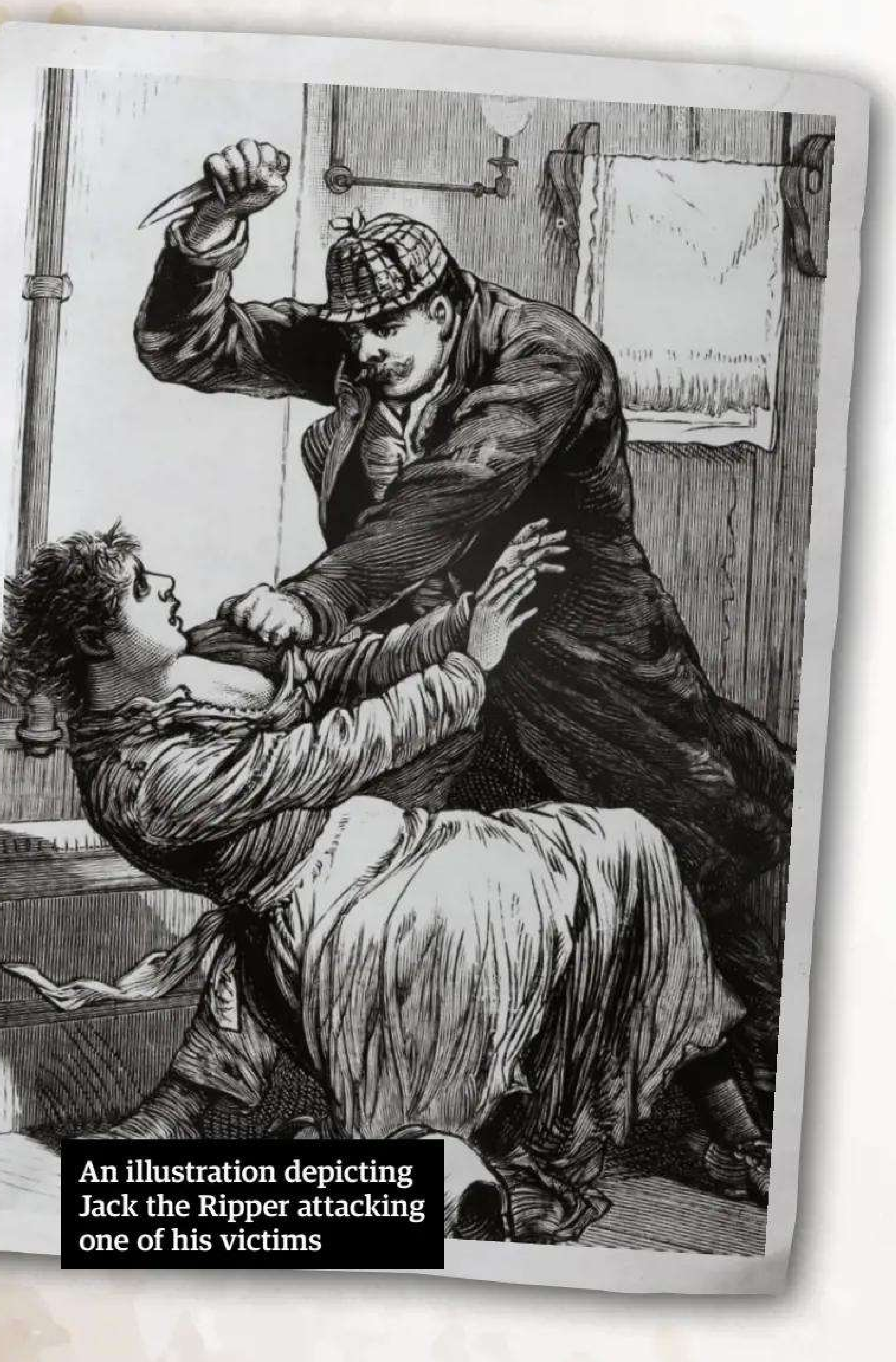


Image Source Corbis

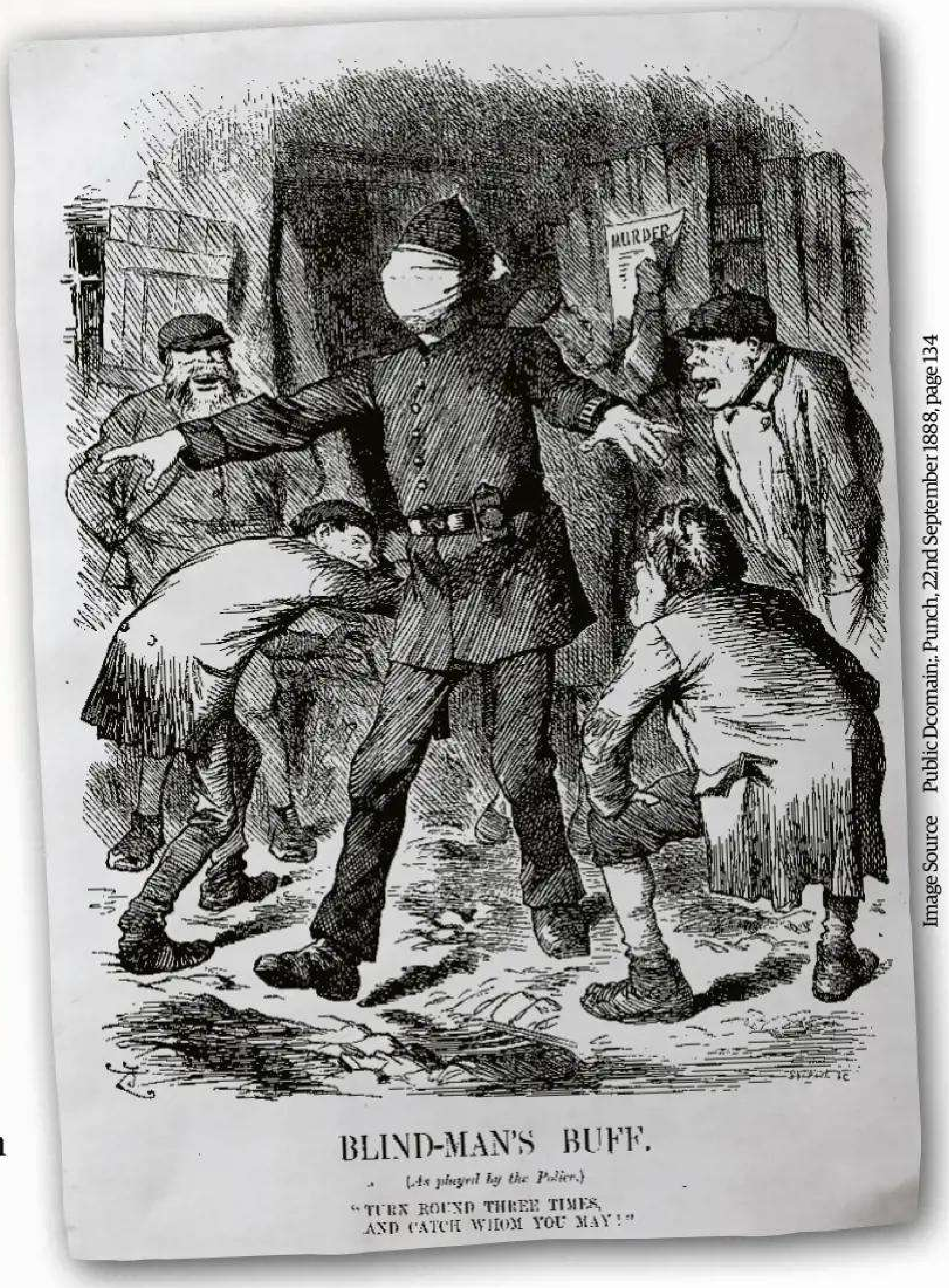
An illustration depicting Jack the Ripper attacking one of his victims

Newspapers quickly latch on to the two murders and the leather apron is seen as vital evidence by the press. A man colloquially known as 'Leather Apron,' John Pizer, is reported to have been seen with Chapman shortly before her murder. Pizer had previously attacked a man with a knife and sexually assaulted a prostitute the previous summer, which doesn't help his cause. Just as importantly – given the rampant suspicion of Jews in the East End – Pizer is Jewish, spurring the press on to hysterical anti-Semitism. The East London Observer describes Pizer as having a face "not altogether pleasant to look upon, by reason of the grizzly black strips of hair" and possessing "thin lips" with "a cruel sardonic kind of look". However, Pizer has an alibi for both murders.

Over the course of the investigation, more than 2,000 people are interviewed in connection to the murders, with a focus on slaughtermen, butchers and those in the medical profession, due to the initial belief that the murderer must have some anatomical knowledge. With thousands of accusations every week, Abberline and H Division is stretched to breaking point. Public dissatisfaction with the investigation leads to the formation of a vigilante group, The Whitechapel Vigilance Committee. Frustrated with the police's performance, the committee starts its own patrols, paying men a small wage to patrol the streets from midnight to the early hours of the morning.

Without some of the most basic forensic science that crime-fighters will take for granted in the 20th century Abberline struggles to make any headway. The policeman would walk the streets until the early hours searching for clues and would often give unfortunates fourpence for a night's doss to get them off the streets. At one point H Division has 1,600 reports to wade through and the strain on Abberline nearly breaks him.

The police are deluged with letters – most of them overwhelmingly certain fakes – and information they do not trust. However, physical profiles built from claimed witness reports, in contradiction to the romanticised image of the Ripper, suggest a white man in his twenties or thirties with a moustache and dressed shabbily or as a tradesman or sailor. A criminal profile by police surgeon Dr Thomas Bond suggests a quiet, eccentric man without anatomical knowledge and driven by sexual mania to kill: "The murderer must have been a man of physical strength and of great coolness and daring. There is no evidence that he had an accomplice. He must in my opinion be a man subject to periodical attacks of homicidal and erotic mania. The character of the mutilations indicate that the man may be in a condition sexually, that may be called satyriasis."



BLIND-MAN'S BUFF.

(As played by the Police.)

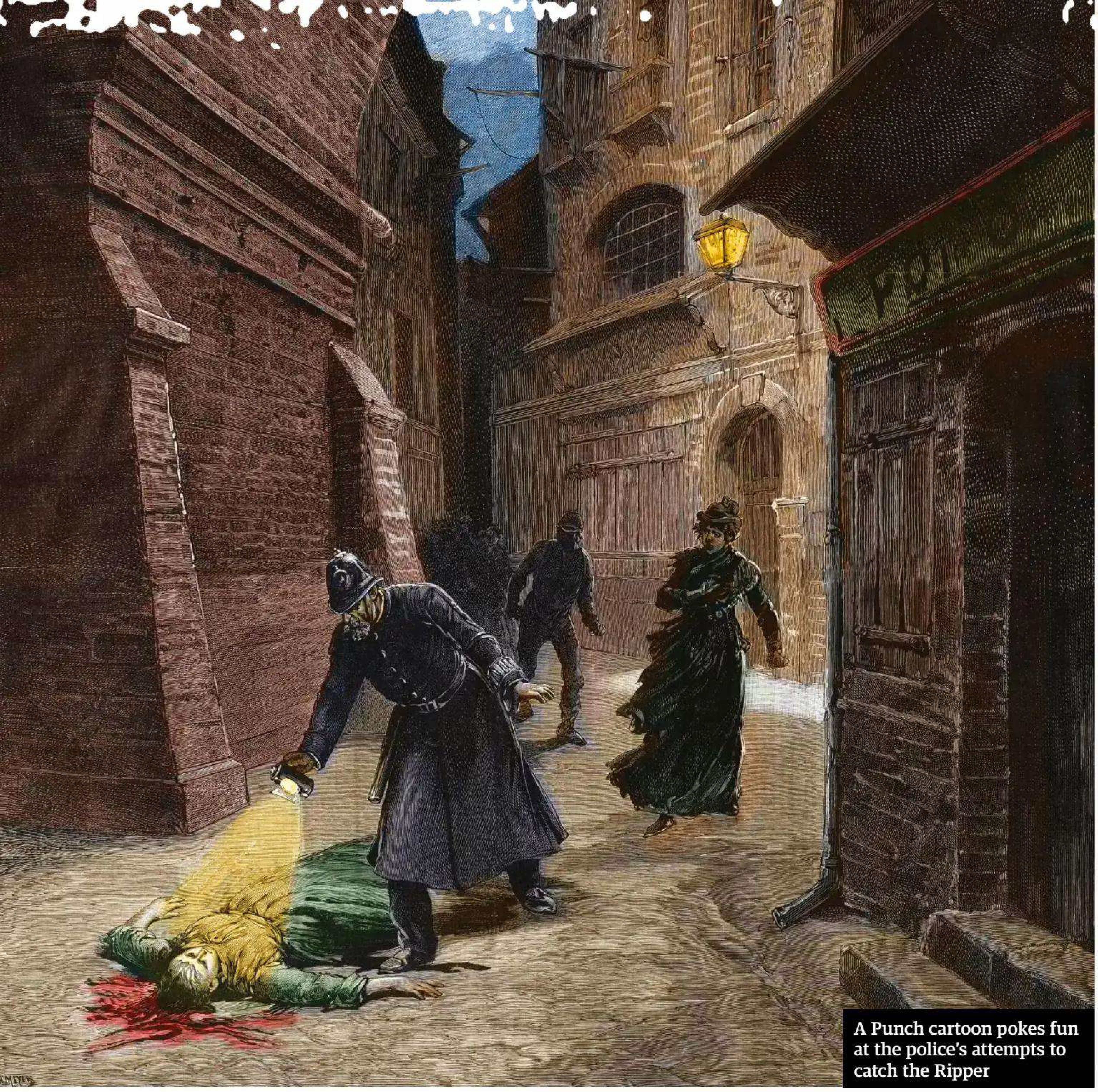
"TURN ROUND THREE TIMES,
AND CATCH WHOM YOU MAY!"

Image Source Public Dcomain; Punch, 22nd September 1888, page 134

Victorians make much of sexual dysfunction and many who end up in lunatic asylums are committed there for activities that would not raise an eyebrow today. Nevertheless, while Ripper victims show no signs of sexual assault, most believe that there is a sexual element to the murders, given the way the corpses are posed and the genital mutilations that most display. Abberline is suspicious of Jacob Isenschmid and at one point declares him to be the most likely suspect, not a great leap, as he is given to bouts of insanity and is known as the 'Mad Pork Butcher.' He is arrested on 12 September and subsequently committed to the Bow, an infirmary asylum. Several weeks pass following Chapman's death and the hysteria following her death begins to die down. The East End allows itself to hope that the worst has passed before it is struck with a horrific double killing in the early hours of 30 September.

Like Nichols and Chapman, Liz Stride has worked as a prostitute but had previously run a coffee house with her husband, who had died in 1884. At that time, Stride is working as a charlady and making some money sewing, while occasionally receiving money from her on-off partner, Michael Kidney. Days before her murder, Dr Thomas Barnardo claims to have seen Stride in a lodging house in Whitechapel among a group of women who opine that they might soon be murdered by the Ripper.

> "Even before the Ripper's reign of terror, the East End was a hotbed of violence, particularly toward women"



A Punch cartoon pokes fun at the police's attempts to catch the Ripper

Image Source Above Corbis

Stride is found with her throat cut in Berner Street on 30 September. Of the canonical five, Stride's murder is considered the most dubious due to the lack of trademark mutilations, leading to speculation that the murderer is interrupted shortly after killing Stride, or even that her murder is committed by someone other than the Ripper, perhaps a would-be copycat. This theory is given further credence when the body of Cathy Eddowes is discovered in Mitre Square 45 minutes later.

The killing of Stride is significant in that it features one of the most convincing eyewitness descriptions, given by a man named Israel Schwartz. His account suggests that he saw the Ripper attack Stride before becoming aware that he was observed, shouting "Lipski!" before Schwartz escapes. The police suggest the colloquial term, used to refer to Jews, is essayed to an accomplice nearby, who makes it towards Schwartz himself. This theory leads the police to initially conclude that their suspects are Jewish.

However, Abberline is of the opinion that the term is aimed in a derogatory manner at Schwartz, given his Yiddish features. Such is Abberline's standing in the investigation that this take is adopted without question, discounting the theory that the Ripper was Jewish and working with Jewish accomplices.

Eddowes is not known to work routinely as a prostitute and is in a relationship at the time of her death. She is given to heavy drinking, however, and on the night of her death is taken to Bishopsgate Police Station and locked in a cell until sober. At around 1am, she is released and turns to walk in the opposite direction to her lodging house – in less than an hour she will be dead. Unlike Stride, Eddowes' body has been horrifically mutilated. Having cut her throat, the killer also disembowels his victim, removing part of her kidneys and uterus. The corpse's eyes have also been removed, as well as the tip of her nose and an earlobe.

The removal of the kidney is significant. Scotland Yard and H Division are deluged with thousands of letters a week from the public, pointing the finger at possible suspects. What's more, the press claim that a number of letters, purporting to be from the Ripper, have been sent to their offices. Of these letters, only one is believed to be potentially genuine. Sent to George Lusk, head of the Whitechapel Vigilance Committee, two weeks later, it contains a piece of kidney that is purportedly from Eddowes' body. The letter is thought to be significant as the kidney is reported to show signs of Bright's Disease, which Eddowes is known to have suffered from. The writer of the letter – marked as being written 'From Hell' – claims to have eaten the missing kidney half and threatens to send Lusk the bloody knife used in the murder.

Of the many letters received by police, only two others are given any credence. The first is sent to the Central News Agency on 25 September and begins with 'Dear Boss' and is signed 'Jack The Ripper,' the first use of this moniker. It goes on to threaten to send the police the ears of the next

SUSPECTS

Francis Tumblety

Profession: Herbalist, con man

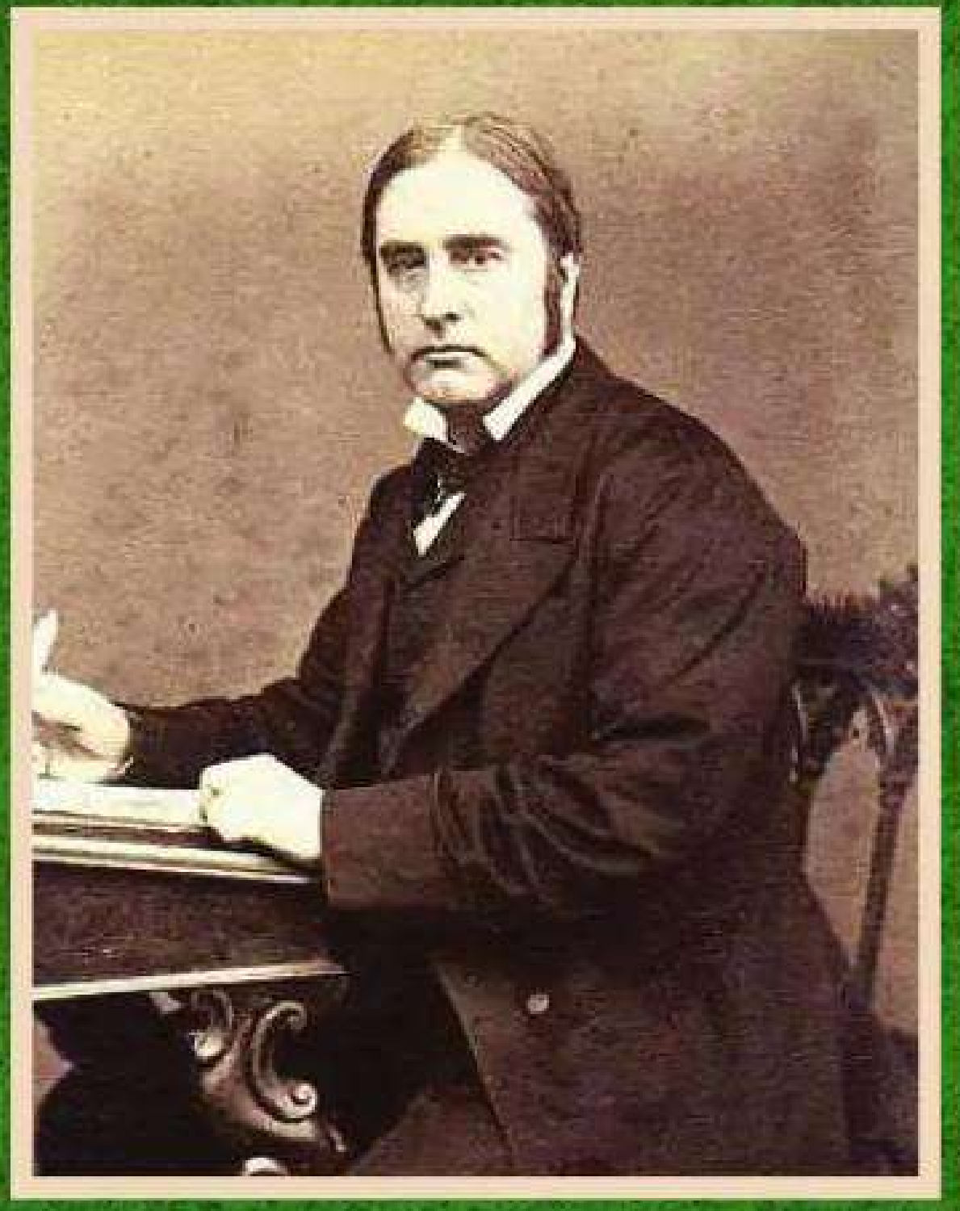
Was he the Ripper?:

An American quack doctor, Tumblety supposedly owned sets of reproductive organs in jars and was thought to be flamboyant – and thus homosexual. While such scant evidence was sufficient for Ripper accusations in the 19th century, Tumblety's extreme misogyny and criminal behaviour led to one investigating officer naming him as his favoured suspect, while a forensic analyst deemed his handwriting bore a similarity to the Ripper letters.

Sir William Gull

Profession: Doctor, Queen's physician

Was he the Ripper?:

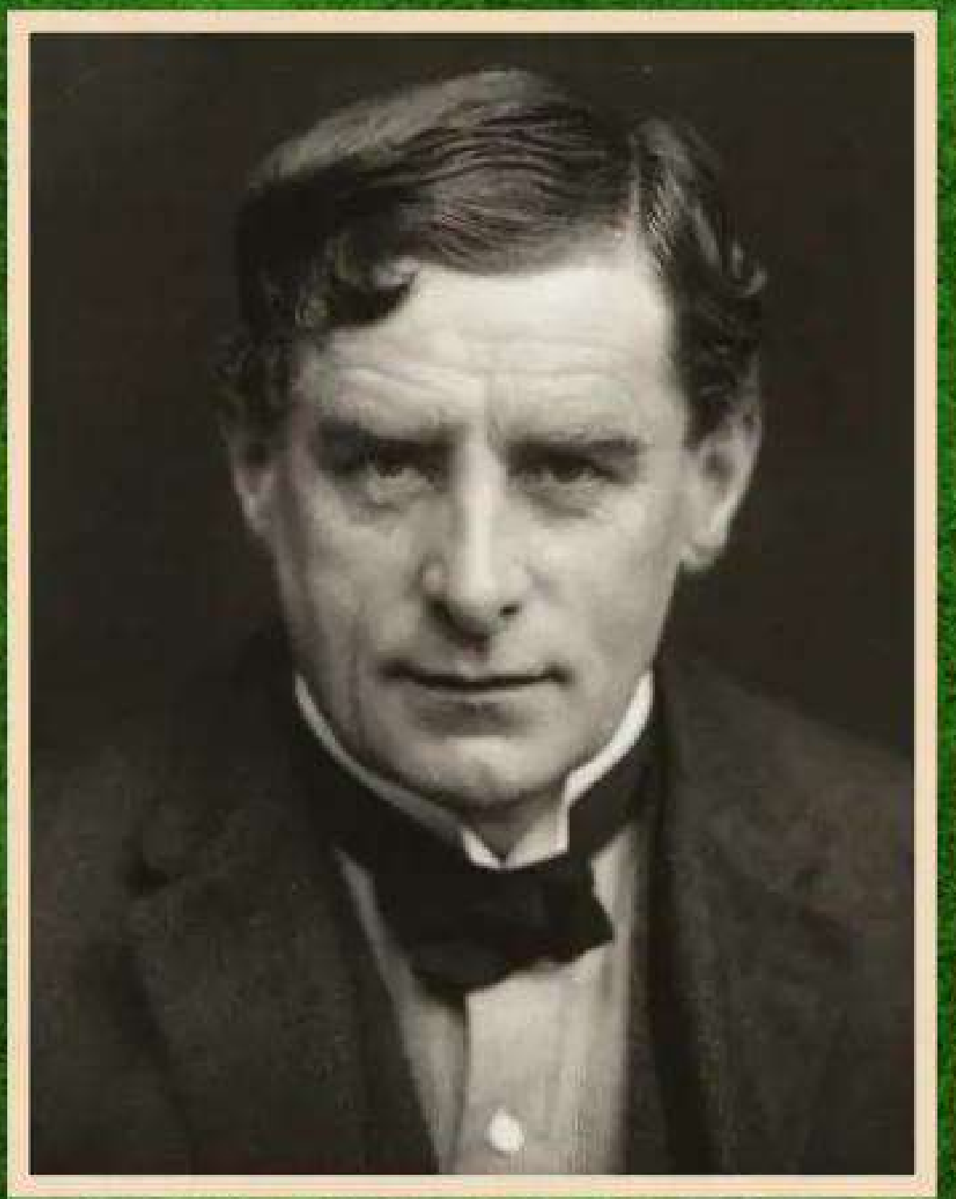


Alan Moore's seminal graphic novel From Hell suggests that Gull was the Ripper, wiping out a group of women who learned of an illegitimate Catholic heir to the throne fathered by Prince Albert Victor. The Queen's surgeon, most famously played by Ian Holm in a film adaptation, is portrayed either as a diligent professional, thoroughly insane or acting as an agent of higher powers, both corporeal and divine. None are taken seriously.

Walter Sickert

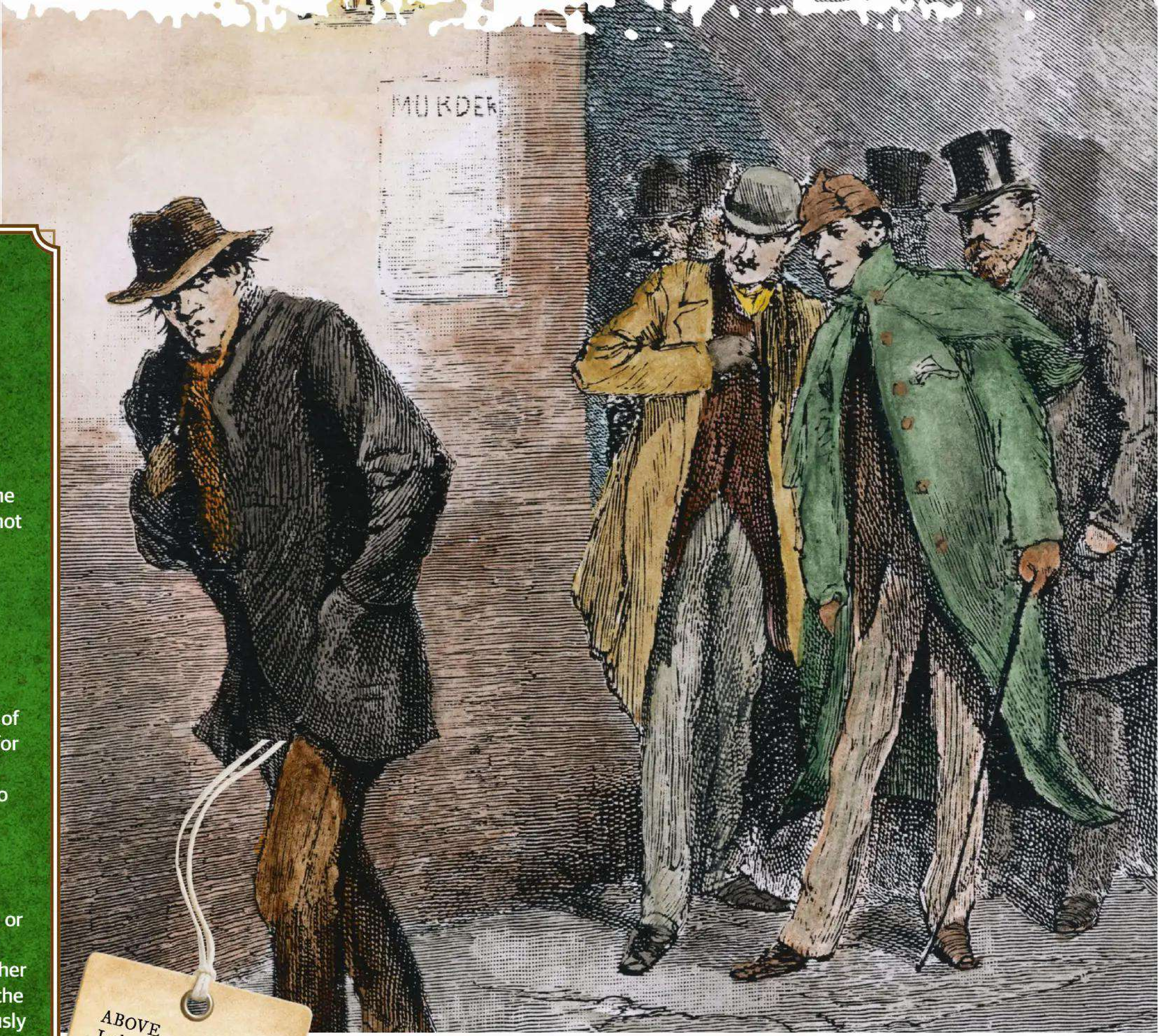
Profession: Artist

Was he the Ripper?:



Famed for his avant-garde paintings, Sickert was open about his interest in Ripperology. After his death, Sickert was accused of being an accomplice – or even committing the murders himself – in various books, including one by crime novelist Patricia Cornwell, who claims to have matched Sickert's DNA to one of the Ripper letters. The theory is widely dismissed among historians.

Image Sources 1. Public Domain: A Sketch of an Eventful Career by Francis Tumblety 2. Public Domain. 3. Public Domain; National Portrait Gallery, London.



ABOVE
Jack the Ripper has become one of the world's most famous bogeymen

JACKS VICTIMS?

Martha Tabram

Separated from her husband and with a reputation for excessive drinking, Martha Tabram was destitute by August 1888 and making a living from prostitution. Her body was discovered with 39 stab wounds but she had not been further mutilated. Tabram is not generally considered an official 'canonical' victim of the Ripper.

Polly Nichols

Estranged from her husband and children, Polly Nichols had been in and out of workhouses for over five years by the time of her death. She had earned enough money for a bed on the night of her murder but spent the money on alcohol, forcing her back onto the streets.

Annie Chapman

Known as Dark Annie due to either her hair or her black moods, 47-year-old Chapman had fallen on hard times following the death of her husband, birth of a handicapped child and the death of another. Although she had previously sold flowers and relied on an allowance from her husband, his death forced her into prostitution to support herself financially.

Liz Stride

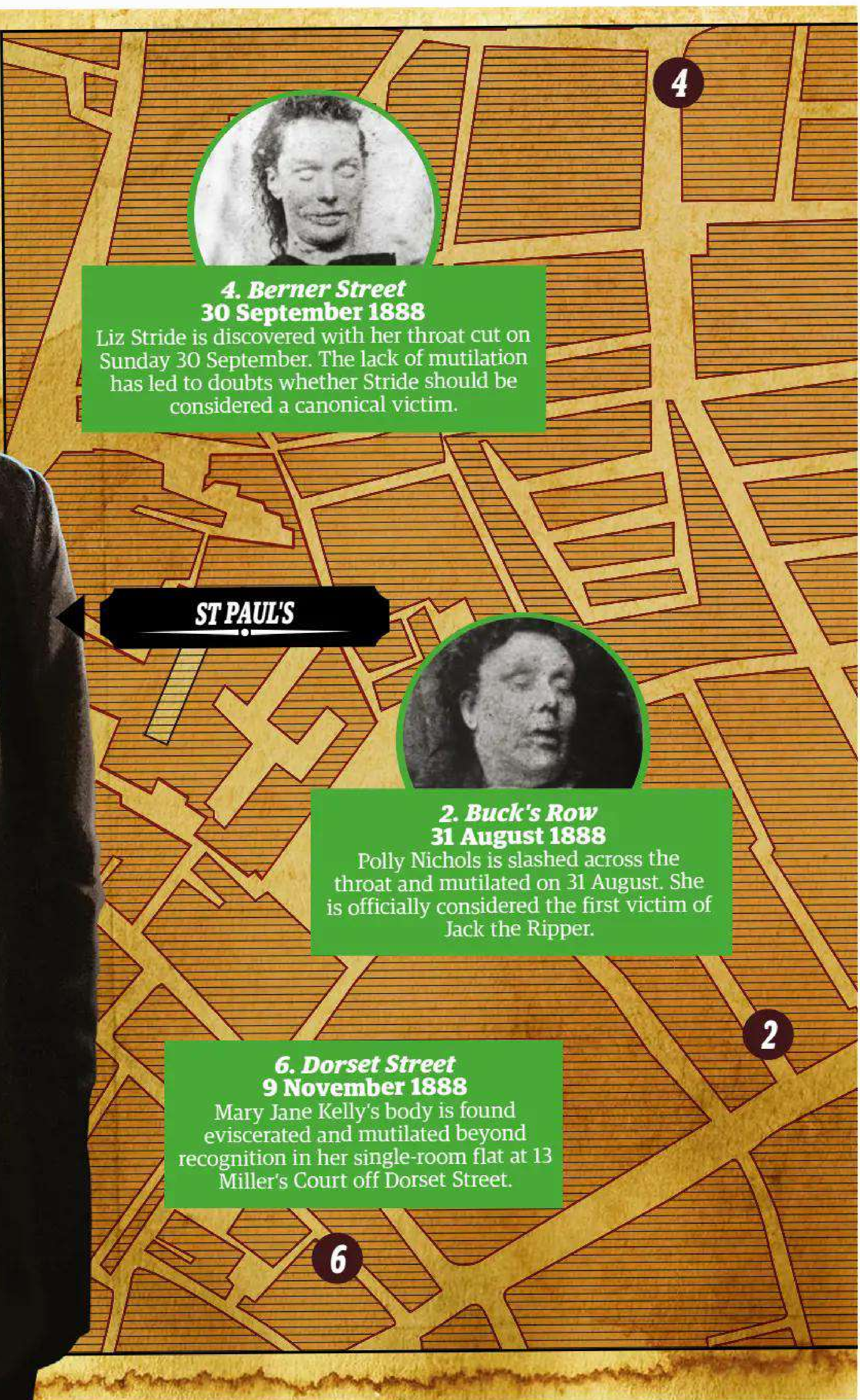
Known as Long Liz, possibly due to her surname or appearance, Stride was a Swedish immigrant given to flights of fancy and worked as a prostitute on the streets of Whitechapel. Some Ripperologists question whether Stride was a Ripper victim as her body was not mutilated; others suggest that the killer was interrupted in the act.

Cathy Eddowes

The second victim in the so-called 'double event' on 30 September, the 46-year-old Eddowes was known as an intelligent, striking and jolly woman who had moved to London from Wolverhampton. There's some doubt as to whether Eddowes worked as a prostitute, though she was seen talking to a stranger minutes before her death.

Mary Jane Kelly

The last of the canonical murders, Kelly did not quite fit the established profile. While working as a prostitute, Kelly had her own lodgings and, at 25, was much younger than the other victims. Her murder was by far the most brutal of all the Ripper's crimes, resulting in her body being removed not by stretcher, but in eight buckets.



4. Berner Street
30 September 1888
Liz Stride is discovered with her throat cut on Sunday 30 September. The lack of mutilation has led to doubts whether Stride should be considered a canonical victim.

2. Buck's Row
31 August 1888
Polly Nichols is slashed across the throat and mutilated on 31 August. She is officially considered the first victim of Jack the Ripper.

6. Dorset Street
9 November 1888
Mary Jane Kelly's body is found eviscerated and mutilated beyond recognition in her single-room flat at 13 Miller's Court off Dorset Street.

victim, but while Eddowes' ear has been cut, the pathologist suggests this was coincidental to the Ripper slashing her throat.

The next, received on 1 October, is signed 'Saucy Jacky' and references the 'double event' of the murders of Stride and Eddowes. Although initially given credence due to the apparent foretelling of the murders, the postcard is actually postmarked after the event. Both are widely thought to be hoaxes written after the event, with police even suspecting unscrupulous journalists keen to keep the story alive. The police put constables into plain clothes to blend in with Whitechapel's locals and copies of the letters purporting to be from the Ripper are posted throughout the area in the vain hope that someone will recognise the handwriting in them.

However, Abberline has another problem – the climate of fear and hysteria breeds xenophobia, which finds an outlet in persecution of the local Jewish population. Near to where Eddowes was found is a message scrawled on a wall, implying Jews are responsible for the murders. Five weeks pass without another murder, with an increased police presence and public vigilance at a high.

Mary Jane Kelly, unlike the other murder victims who were all in their forties, is 25 years old and rents a private room. She works as a prostitute and has a fondness for drink, having ended up in London by way of Ireland and Wales, according to various reports. On the morning of 9 November, Kelly's landlord dispatches a lackey to collect the six weeks of rent she owes. He finds only Kelly's body, horribly eviscerated beyond recognition in her flat. Over the fire is a kettle, the solder on which has melted. Abberline surmises that the killer burned Kelly's clothes – which are missing – to provide light in which to carry out his macabre work. The mutilation is so extensive that Dr Bond believes the murderer would have been at work for at least two hours. Kelly's organs have been removed from her chest and abdominal cavities, her face destroyed and heart missing.

The brutality of the killing reignites fear across Whitechapel, so Scotland Yard announces a pardon for anyone with information leading to the arrest of the Ripper. However, at the height of his notoriety, the Ripper disappears. Just as quickly as his reign of terror on the East End began, it ends. While there are superficially similar murders in 1889 and 1891, it is not believed the same man committed them. The investigation slowly winds down but the Ripper lives on in the public's consciousness. The Whitechapel murders have also galvanised politicians into acting to improve the state of the East End's slums, many of which are cleared over the following decades. Abberline moves back to Scotland Yard, receives a promotion to the rank of chief inspector and retires in 1892.

> "The brutality of the killing reignites fear across Whitechapel"

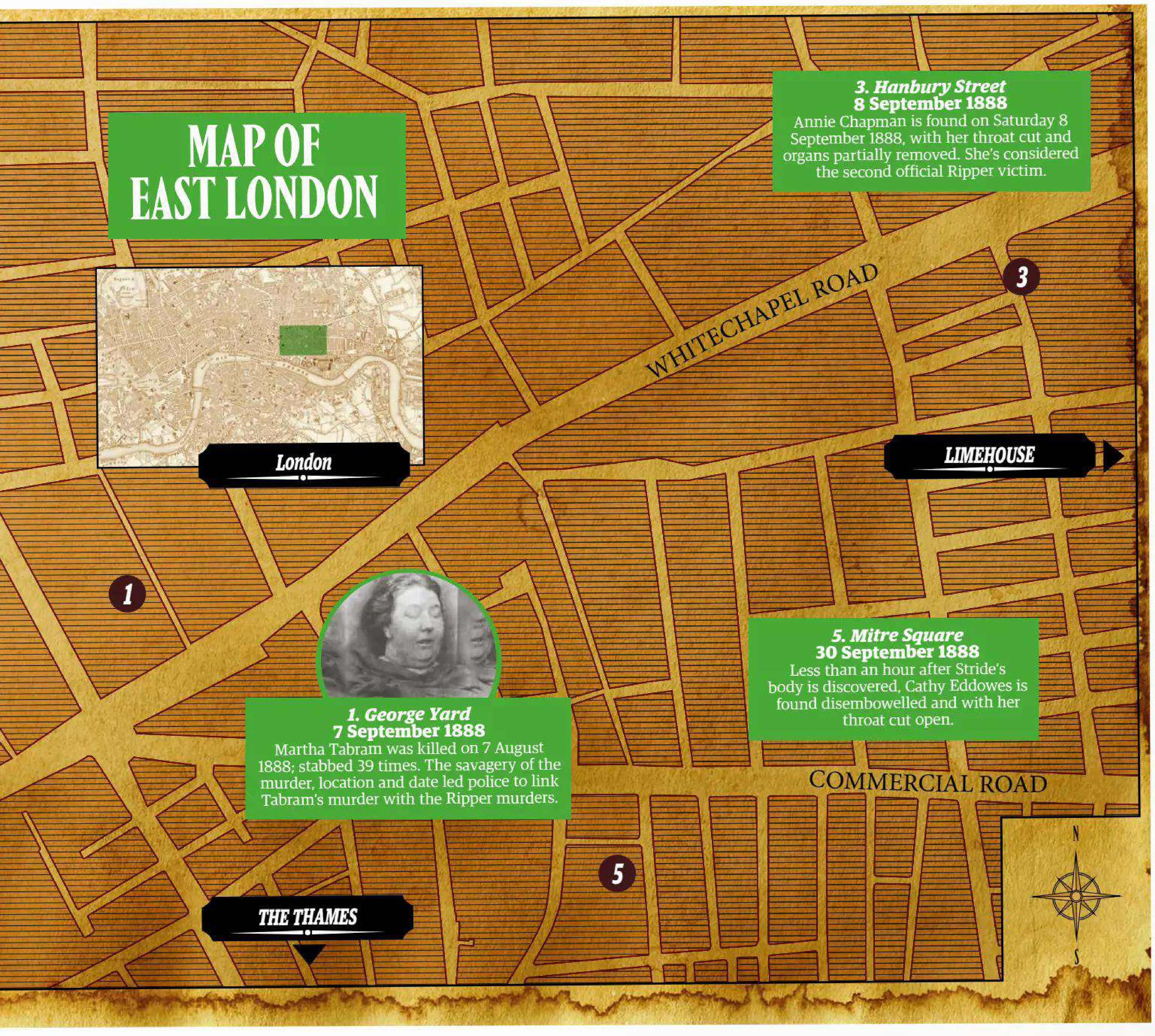
While opinion of the identity of the Ripper may be divided, most experts believe that only incarceration, removal from Whitechapel or death would have prevented the Ripper from killing again; having been forced to kill from some sort of compulsion he would have been unable to resist had he remained in the area and at liberty. In 1894 Metropolitan Police Chief Constable Melville Macnaghten publishes a report that names three suspects – John Druitt, Aaron Kosminski and Michael Ostrog – as three likely candidates. However, factual inaccuracies blight the report, while Ostrog was likely imprisoned in France at the time of the murders. Macnaghten's report is indicative of the lack of sound factual bases behind many Ripper accusations.

As for the man in charge of the investigation at the time, Abberline's favoured candidate was Seweryn Antonowicz Kłosowski, also known as George Chapman, a Polish immigrant hanged in 1903 for murdering three of his mistresses. Chapman worked as butcher, was known to be paranoid and to carry a knife, lived near the location of the first murder, matched physical profiles from witness statements and hated women. "I cannot help feeling that this is the man we struggled so hard to capture 15 years ago," said the Ripper hunter in an interview conducted in 1903 with the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

Abberline pointed out that the date of Chapman's arrival in England coincided with the beginning of the murders and that they ceased when he left for the USA, where Chapman was later tried and hanged for murdering his mistresses. Chapman had also studied medicine and surgery in Russia – leading Abberline to state that some of the Ripper murders constituted the work of an expert surgeon. The inspector also recalled a story in which a wealthy American gentleman had offered to pay a sub-curator at a pathology museum for organs – perhaps connecting this anecdote with evidence that the Ripper had removed several organs from his victims.

"It seems beyond belief that such inhuman wickedness could enter into the mind of any man," said Abberline of his theory. However, the retired policeman admitted 15 years later that Scotland Yard was none the wiser as to the Ripper's true identity. The same can be said nearly 140 years later; Jack the Ripper is an enduring mystery whose identity seems destined never to be revealed, despite our best attempts.

MAP OF EAST LONDON



3. Hanbury Street
8 September 1888
Annie Chapman is found on Saturday 8 September 1888, with her throat cut and organs partially removed. She's considered the second official Ripper victim.

1. George Yard
7 September 1888
Martha Tabram was killed on 7 August 1888; stabbed 39 times. The savagery of the murder, location and date led police to link Tabram's murder with the Ripper murders.

5. Mitre Square
30 September 1888
Less than an hour after Stride's body is discovered, Cathy Eddowes is found disembowelled and with her throat cut open.

Map Image Sources Map: Getty Images 1. Public Domain; Royal London Hospital Archives and Museum 2. Public Domain; Records of the Metropolitan Police Office, National Archives, catalog number MEPO 3/140 4. Public Domain; Anonymous Private Collection.

LONDON'S MOST NOTORIOUS KILLERS

(OTHER THAN JACK THE RIPPER!)

During the 20th century, some of the world's most terrifying and cunning killers stalked the streets of London

Dr Crippen and his lover Ethel Le Neve on trial in London in 1910

DR CRIPPEN

Discover how the homicidal homeopath poisoned his wife before attempting to flee with his mistress

Hawley Harvey Crippen was an American homeopath who moved to London with his wife Cora in 1897, eventually settling at No 39 Hilldrop Crescent, Camden. He found a job as a manager at the Drouet Institute for the Deaf, where he began an affair with a typist named Ethel Le Neve. Meanwhile, his wife Cora was performing as a music hall artist – until she mysteriously disappeared in January 1910. Her famous friends agitated police to investigate, and eventually they found a human torso in the cellar the Crippens' home, which they identified as Cora's due to a distinctive scar. The torso was found to contain significant amounts of scopolamine. At the time this drug was frequently combined with morphine as an anaesthetic for surgery, but at high concentrations it could be fatal.

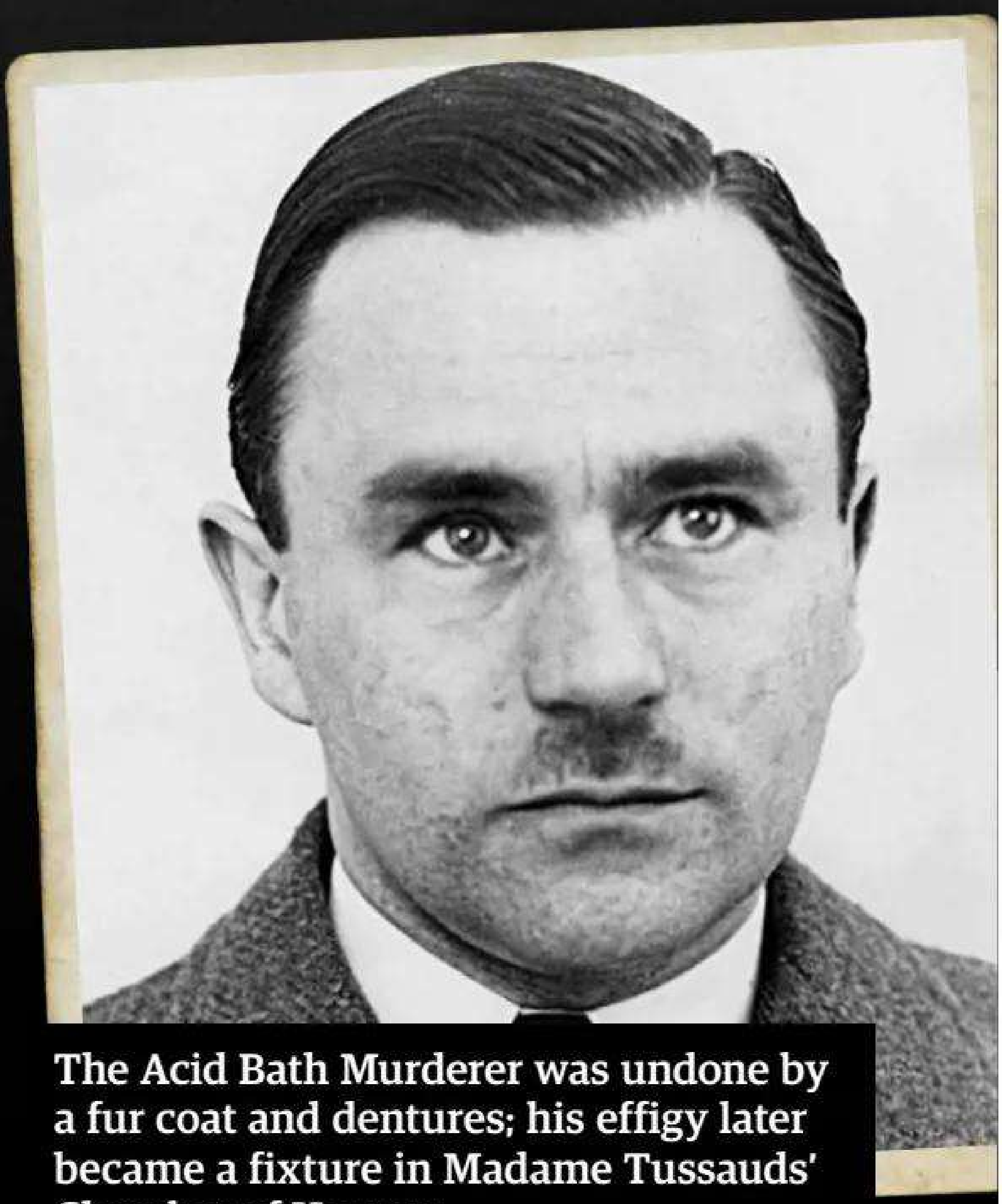
Crippen and his lover fled to Canada, where they were arrested on board the ship Montrose after its captain telegrammed authorities after suspecting the two were the fugitives he'd heard about in the news. Chief Inspector Walter Dew took a faster ship to catch up with the pair and, disguised as a pilot, came aboard the Montrose. On being introduced to the fleeing poisoner, he famously said, "Good morning, Dr Crippen. Do you know me?". Crippen responded: "Thank God it's over," and allowed himself to be cuffed. He was executed for Cora's murder in November 1910 after a high-profile trial.

JOHN GEORGE HAIGH (AKA "THE ACID BATH MURDERER")

A ruthless gambler with a lust for money turned to murder to fund his exploits

Born in Lincolnshire in 1909, John George Haigh broke away from his strictly religious upbringing for a life of crime. After serving time for fraud, he decided that he should kill his victims rather than leave them alive to testify against him. Posing as an engineer, between 1944 and 1949 he murdered at least six people, though he later claimed that his victims numbered nine. He shot or bludgeoned his victims before disposing of their bodies in drums filled with sulphuric acid. Haigh then used forged documents to live off the proceeds of their property.

Haigh was apprehended after police investigating the disappearance of Olive Durand-Deacon, a wealthy widow, found a dry-cleaning receipt for her fur coat amongst his papers. When further investigations turned up part of a foot, dentures, and gallstones, which were resistant to acid, he was arrested. In February 1949 Haigh confessed, falsely claiming that he had drunk the blood of his victims. Haigh wrongly believed that, without a corpse, he couldn't be convicted, but despite his pleas of insanity, he was found guilty after a jury deliberation that lasted less than 20 minutes. Haigh was hanged at Wandsworth Prison on 10 August 1949.



The Acid Bath Murderer was undone by a fur coat and dentures; his effigy later became a fixture in Madame Tussauds' Chamber of Horrors.

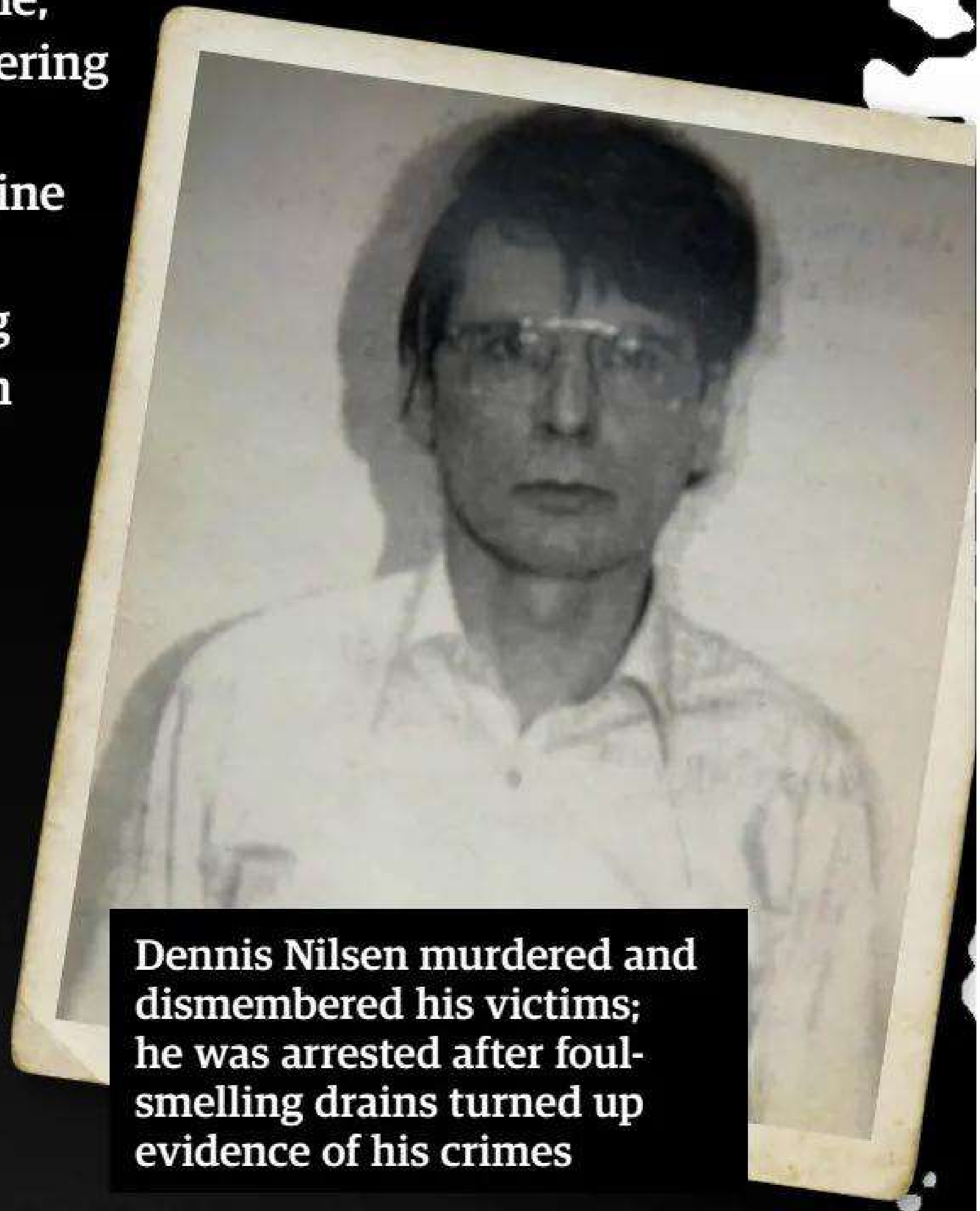
DENNIS NILSEN

The Muswell Hill Murderer and necrophile lured at least a dozen men and boys to their deaths

Scottish-born Dennis Nilsen learned the art of butchery while serving in the catering corps as a young man. After a short stint as a police officer, he settled into a life in the London civil service, while living alone first in Melrose Avenue, Cricklewood, then at Cranley Gardens, Muswell Hill.

Apparently quiet and unassuming, Nilsen was a serial killer and necrophile who targeted vulnerable, often homeless men that he met in pubs. After offering them a bed for the night he strangled or drowned them, before performing an almost ritualistic routine of washing and dressing the corpses. He kept the remains of his victims at home for weeks, sleeping with them and engaging in sexual acts. Only when they began to decompose did he dissect them, eventually burning the remains or flushing them into the drains.

Nilsen was arrested in 1983, after a Dyno-Rod investigation into blocked drains turned up a grisly discovery of human tissue and bones. He made a full confession, even leading police to remains of victims that he had concealed at his other London address. Nilsen was convicted of six murders and two attempted murders. He received a life sentence for his crimes and died in 2018, aged 72.


Dennis Nilsen murdered and dismembered his victims; he was arrested after foul-smelling drains turned up evidence of his crimes

John Christie was far from the mild-mannered gentleman his acquaintances believed him to be; this murderer's false testimony sent a man to his death

JOHN CHRISTIE

At the infamous 10 Rillington Place, John Christie's crimes may have sent an innocent man to the gallows

Raised by a domineering mother, John Christie served sentences for petty offences before reinventing himself as a respectable man, using his position as a wartime special constable to win the trust of vulnerable women. Falsely claiming that he had medical knowledge, he lured women to his home at Rillington Place and there raped and murdered them, often using gas or strangulation. He concealed their bodies in and around the property. Among Christie's victims were his neighbour, Beryl Evans, and her baby daughter, Geraldine. He later gave false evidence against Evans's husband, Timothy, that sent him to the gallows.

Christie murdered his wife, Ethel, in 1952, hiding her body beneath floorboards before he fled Rillington Place. The following year, new tenants discovered three bodies behind the walls and further investigations revealed three more. Christie was arrested in 1953. He confessed to seven murders but stood trial for just one: that of his wife, Ethel. Christie entered a plea of insanity but was convicted. He was hanged at Pentonville Prison on 15 July 1953.

Timothy Evans was granted a royal pardon in 1966. His case was pivotal in the abolition of the death penalty in Great Britain.

GORDON FREDERICK CUMMINS (AKA "THE BLACKOUT RIPPER")

As the war raged in the skies, the Blackout Ripper brought terror to the streets of London

Known to his friends as "The Duke", the Blackout Ripper used the cover of wartime to commit a string of grotesque and brutal murders

In 1941, Yorkshire-born Gordon Frederick Cummins was a trainee pilot in the RAF whose aristocratic manner earned him the nickname, "The Duke". Between 9 and 14 February 1942, Cummins attacked, strangled and mutilated six women in the West End of London; four of his victims died, and police later linked him to two earlier murders.

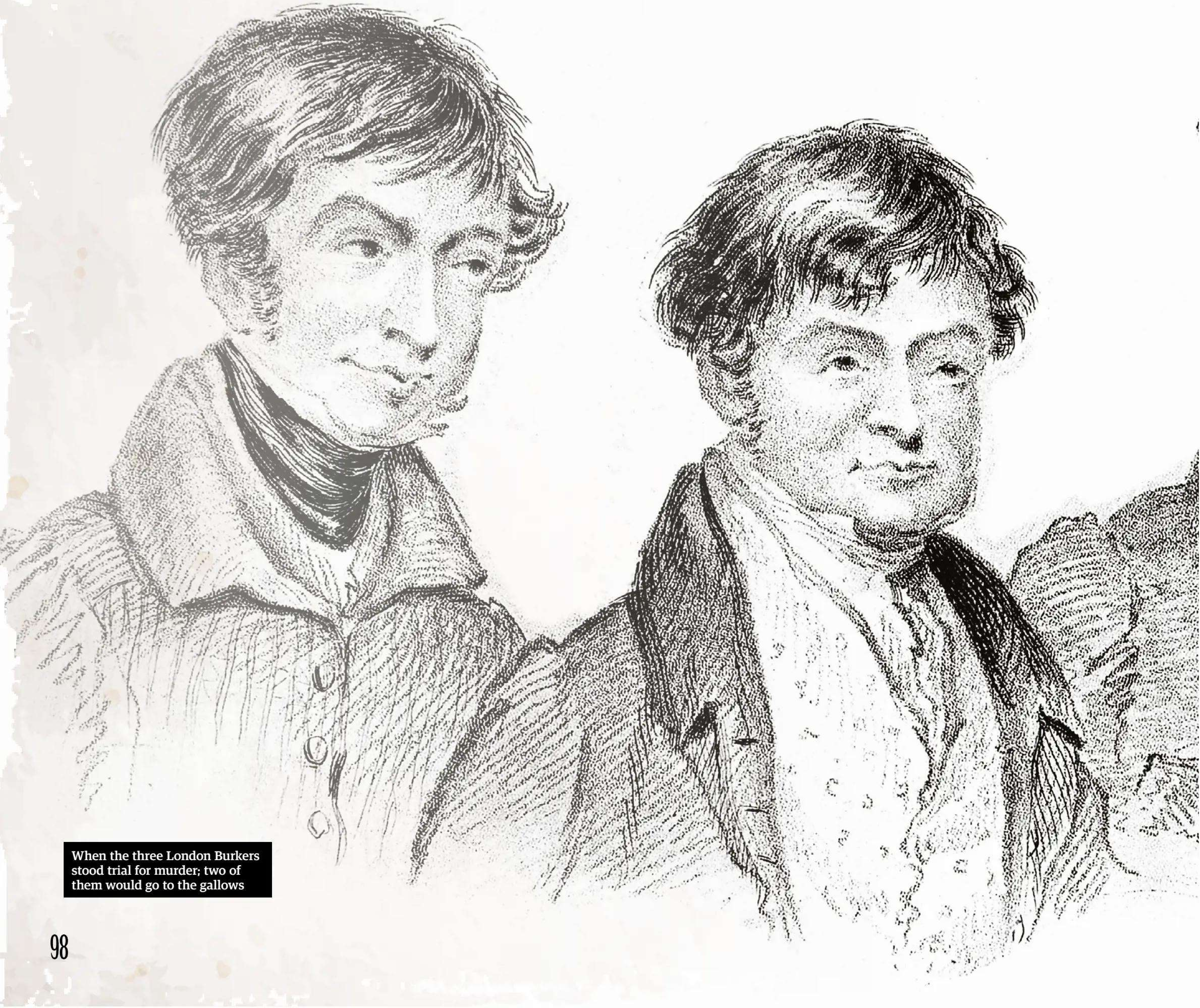
Cummins left his fingerprints on a tin-opener that had been used in the murder of Evelyn Oatley, as well as a gas mask and haversack at the scene of another crime; printed in the haversack was Cummins's unique service number. His intended victim, Margaret Heywood, had escaped as Cummins attempted to throttle her and was able to make a statement to police.

Thanks to the items he had left at the scene, Cummins was arrested. He claimed innocence, but items belonging to the dead women were found among his belongings, as well as bloodstained clothing. When police compared his fingerprints to those found at the crime scenes, they were a match. When the two women who had survived his attacks were asked to attend an identity parade, Margaret Heywood identified him immediately as her assailant.

Cummins pleaded not guilty to the murder of Evelyn Oatley; the jury took just 35 minutes to find him guilty. He was hanged at Wandsworth Prison on 25 June 1942, as air raid sirens blared across London.

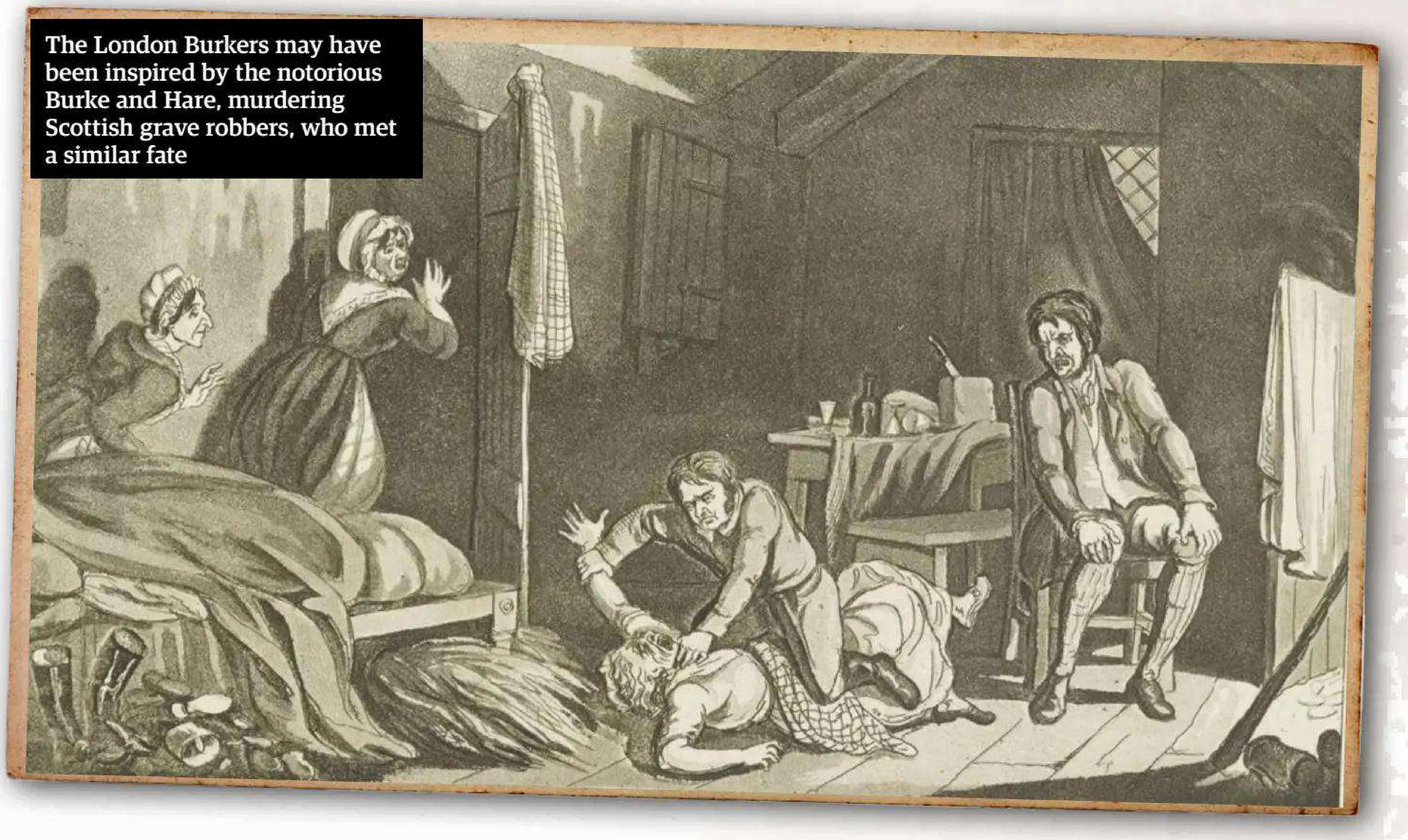
THE LONDON BURKERS

Inspired by Burke and Hare, the murderous antics of the London Burkers kept the anatomists of London well-supplied with specimens



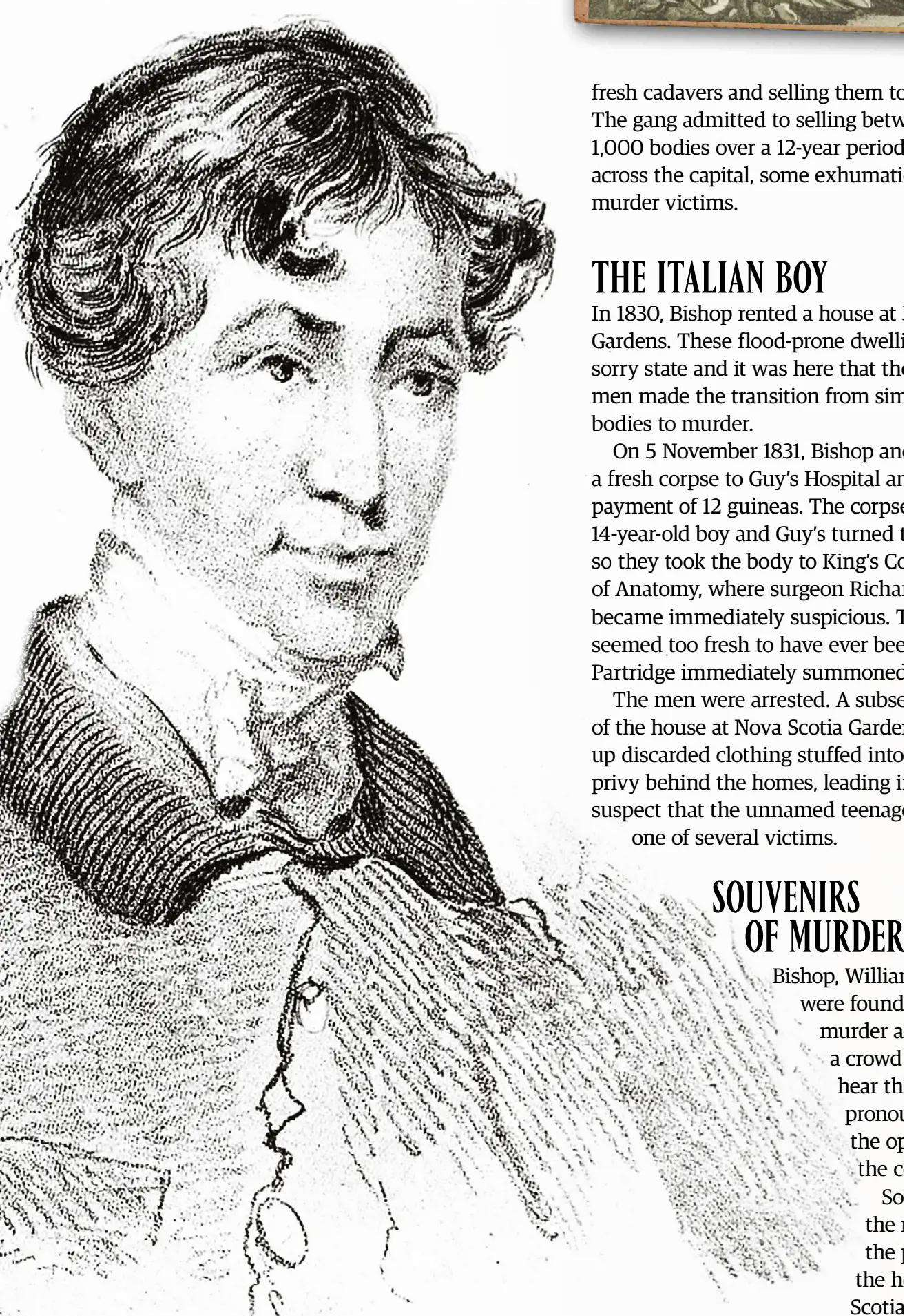
When the three London Burkers stood trial for murder; two of them would go to the gallows

During the 19th century, the demand for fresh corpses by medical schools to teach anatomy greatly outstripped the legal supply. In Edinburgh, Burke and Hare became notorious in 1828 for carrying out murders to supply bodies to anatomist Robert Knox. Three years later, the London Burkers applied the same model in the English capital.


The London Burkers may have been inspired by the notorious Burke and Hare, murdering Scottish grave robbers, who met a similar fate

THE RESURRECTION MEN

In 1820s Bethnal Green, John Bishop, Thomas Williams, Michael Shields and James May formed a gang and became resurrection men, digging up fresh cadavers and selling them to anatomists. The gang admitted to selling between 500 and 1,000 bodies over a 12-year period to surgeons across the capital, some exhumations, some murder victims.



THE ITALIAN BOY

In 1830, Bishop rented a house at 3 Nova Scotia Gardens. These flood-prone dwellings were in a sorry state and it was here that the resurrection men made the transition from simply stealing bodies to murder.

On 5 November 1831, Bishop and May delivered a fresh corpse to Guy's Hospital and asked for a payment of 12 guineas. The corpse was that of a 14-year-old boy and Guy's turned the men away, so they took the body to King's College School of Anatomy, where surgeon Richard Partridge became immediately suspicious. The body seemed too fresh to have ever been buried and Partridge immediately summoned the police.

The men were arrested. A subsequent search of the house at Nova Scotia Gardens turned up discarded clothing stuffed into a well and privy behind the homes, leading investigators to suspect that the unnamed teenage boy was just one of several victims.

SOUVENIRS OF MURDER

Bishop, Williams and May were found guilty of murder and outside, a crowd gathered to hear the sentence pronounced through the open windows of the courtroom.

So notorious were the murders that the police opened the house on Nova Scotia Gardens to the public, charging five shillings for entrance. The public stripped the house bare.

THE CONFESSION

During their investigation, the police identified the dead boy as Carlo Ferrari, from Piedmont, but Bishop and Williams claimed their victim was a Lincolnshire cattle drover, who had met his death on the road to Smithfield Market. In confessions dictated on 4 December, Bishop claimed that he had met the boy in The Bell, a Smithfield pub, on 3 November, and had offered him a place to stay at Nova Scotia Gardens.

Upon arrival, the boy was given rum laced with laudanum. Once he was unconscious, they threw him into the well with a rope tied around his ankles. After he had drowned in the water, they pulled him out of the well, put him in a bag and set about trying to sell his corpse. They subsequently also admitted to the murder of Frances Pigburn, a homeless woman, by the same method. Pigburn's body was sold to St Thomas's for eight guineas. A third victim, a young man named Cunningham, was likewise murdered, on 21 October. He too fetched eight guineas, this time at St Bartholomew's.

THE SENTENCE

Williams and Bishop hanged at Newgate on 5 December 1831, before a crowd of 30,000 people. May was spared the death penalty, as the court believed he had no knowledge of the murders. He was transported to Van Dieman's Land four days before the executions, but died three years later while in prison at Port Arthur, Tasmania, serving time for insubordination on board the penal transport. The other members of the gang were cleared of involvement in the killings by the confessions of Williams and Bishop.

In one final irony, the bodies of the two hanged men were themselves dissected at the Theatre of Anatomy in The Haymarket. Following the dissection, an enormous crowd gathered to view the remains of the London Burkers.

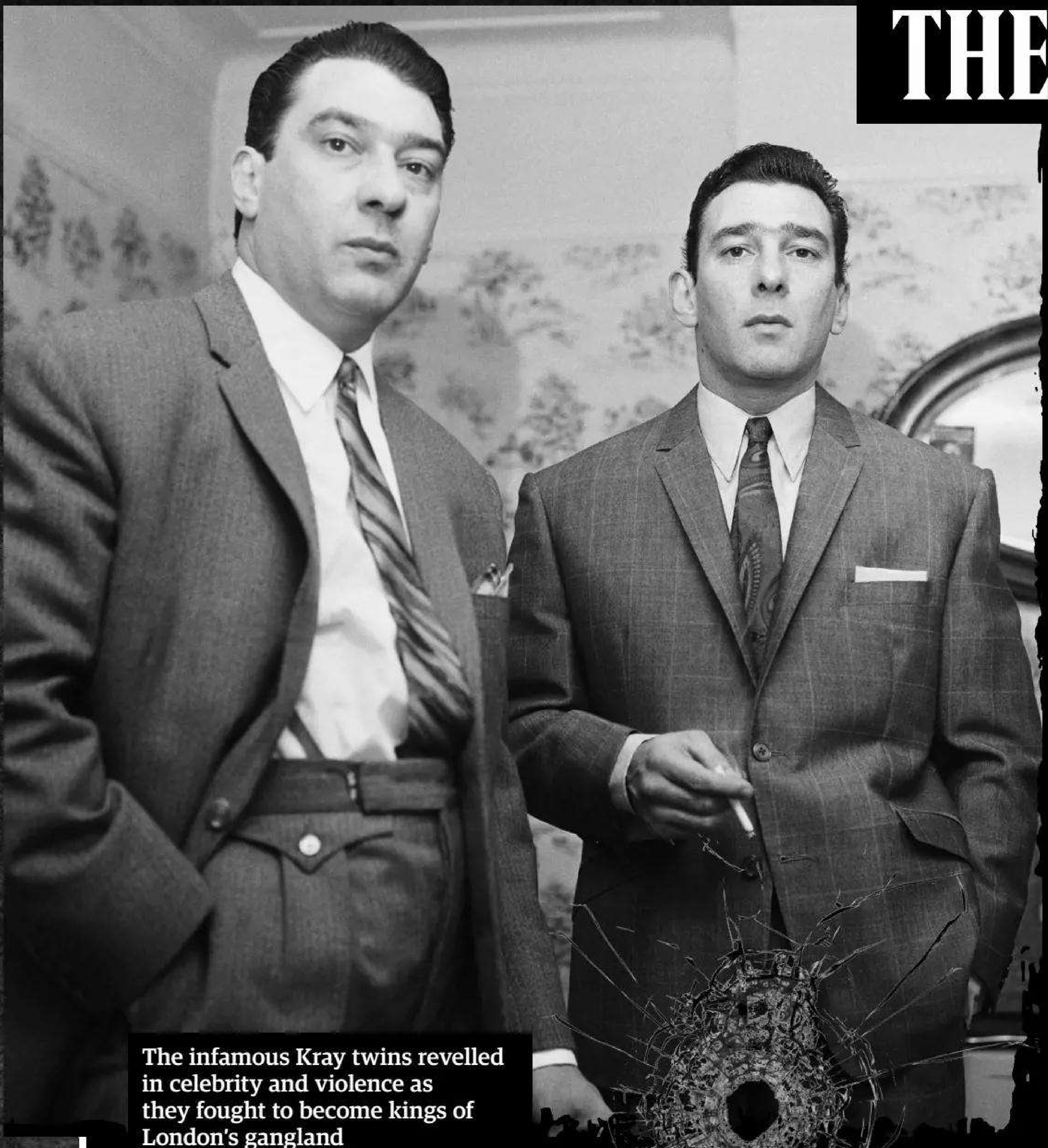
© Getty Images, Alamy, Wiki

GANGSTERS OF LONDON

Embroiled in a deadly feud for control of the capital, the Kray twins and the Richardson Torture Gang became infamous as they battled over London turf

London has always had its share of gangs, but few of the capital's gangsters have achieved the fame and notoriety of the Kray twins. They ruled over a criminal empire in the East End, building a myth that continues to fascinate to this day. In the south, the city belonged to brothers Charles and Eddie Richardson, who rejected the glamorous lifestyle and celebrity-stuffed address books of the Krays in favour of a more old-school sort of crime. Yet as the sixties were swinging, the two gangs engaged in a turf war that saw torture and death on the streets of London.

THE FIRMS

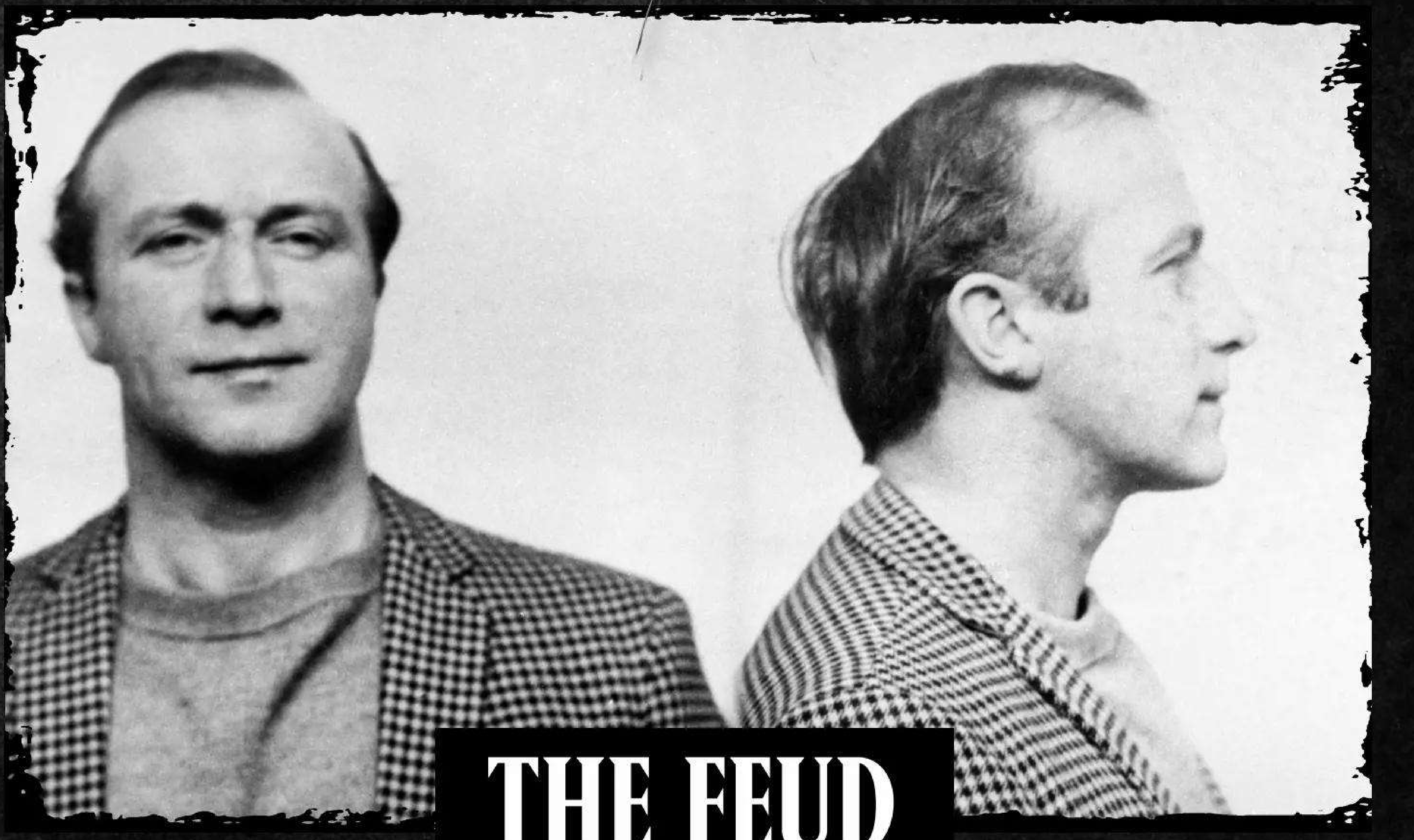


The infamous Kray twins revelled in celebrity and violence as they fought to become kings of London's gangland

Ronnie and Reggie Kray were born in 1933 in Hoxton. Ronnie, the youngest brother by a matter of minutes, was a paranoid schizophrenic, prone to sudden violence and convinced of his own genius. Reggie was the public face of the operation and by their early 20s, their protection rackets, gambling dens and nightclubs meant they controlled much of the East End. They cultivated celebrity friendships and enjoyed a glamorous reputation, splashing the cash in public even as they ruled their turf with fear and violence.

The Richardson Gang, meanwhile, didn't chase celebrity. Nicknamed the Torture Gang by the tabloids, they operated south of the river, with their territory mostly to be found in Camberwell, Peckham, and New Cross. Born in 1934, Charlie Richardson had made his fortune in the scrap metal business before diversifying into extortion and long firm fraud, establishing legitimate businesses as a front for their criminal enterprises. While Charlie was the face of the firm, his enforcers included his brother, Eddie, along with "Mad" Frankie Fraser, who would go on to spend over 40 years in prison for violent offences.

The gang earned their chilling nickname thanks to their violent methods of collecting on their debts. Street legend had it that on one occasion, a collector of their protection money took the cash and gambled it away. His punishment was to be nailed to the floor of a warehouse and kept there for days, as gang members used him as a toilet. They also kept a number of properties, which was where anyone who crossed them would be wired up to an electric generator operated by Roy Hall, and electrocuted until they paid up.



THE FEUD

Charlie Richardson and gang member George Cornell first met the Krays while serving time in Shepton Mallet Prison in the early 1950s and by the early 1960s, the two gangs were on the edge of a turf war. Things began to worsen in 1965 when Ronnie Kray heard rumours that the Richardsons had been developing interests in the West End, but by Christmas the tensions were only simmering. There was mutual antagonism but so far, things seemed to be under control.

That changed at Christmas, when associates of both gangs were drinking at London's Astor Club. It was during this celebration that George Cornell reportedly called Ronnie Kray a "fat poof". Little did Cornell know it, but word of the insult would get back to Kray. It would prove to be a deadly insult.

THE SABINI GANG

The Krays and Richardsons weren't the only gangsters to have called London home

Born Ottavio Handley in 1888, Charles "Darby" Sabini hailed from London's Little Italy. He was the leader of the Sabini Gang, a Clerkenwell-based crime family that made its money from racecourse protection rackets, extortion and nightclub operations. Sabini was known for his imported Sicilian gunmen as well as his gang's vicious razor attacks, not to mention the police and politicians he bought. When he was interred as an enemy alien in 1940, Sabini's empire collapsed. Ironically, he eventually made a living as a bookmaker known affectionately as "Uncle Bob".

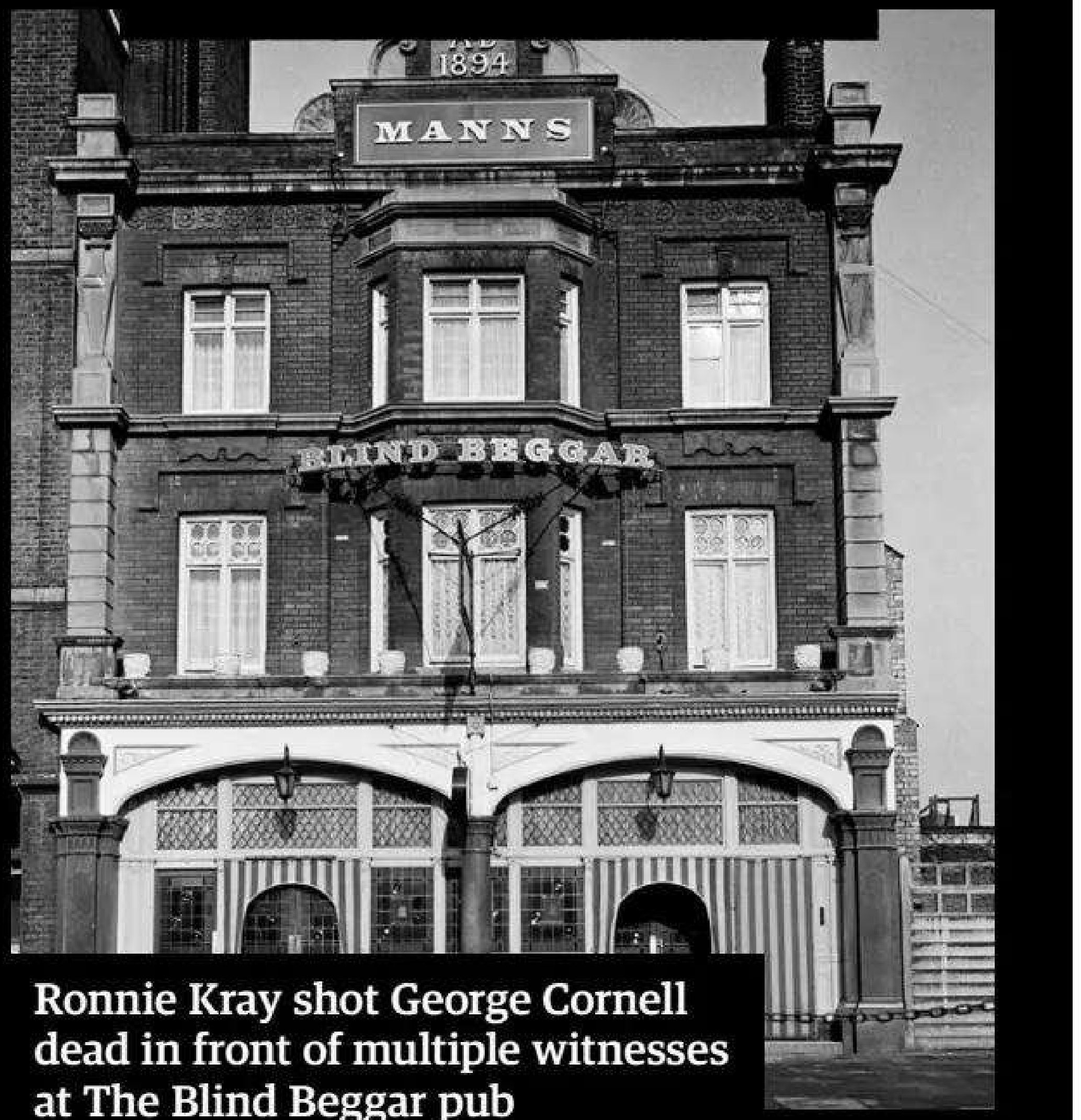
"Mad" Frankie Fraser spent more than four decades behind bars for a string of violent offences

THE TORTURE GANG FALLS

In July 1965, a victim of the Richardson Gang dared to report his vicious beating to the police. Hot on the heels of this development, Johnny Bradbury, a member of the gang, was sentenced to hang for a murder he claimed he had committed on the orders of Charlie Richardson. He agreed to turn Queen's Evidence and in return for cooperating in the downfall of the whole gang, he was pardoned for his crime.

As other members of the gang agreed to testify in return for immunity from prosecution, the net tightened around Charlie Richardson. He was eventually arrested for grievous bodily harm on 30 July 1966, but would see fraud, extortion and assault added to his charges. He was given a sentence of 25 years. The gang war, it seemed, had been won by the Krays.

A REVENGE KILLING



Ronnie Kray shot George Cornell dead in front of multiple witnesses at The Blind Beggar pub

Tensions mounted in March 1966, as Kray associate Richard "Dickie" Hart was killed during a shoot-out at Mr Smith's Club in Catford. Most of the Richardson Gang were arrested in the aftermath but George Cornell, who had thrown the insult about Ronnie's sexuality, was not at the club so escaped arrest. The following day, Ronnie learned that Cornell was drinking at the Blind Beggar pub in Whitechapel. Accompanied by his driver, "Scotch" Jack Dickson and a loyal member of the fire, Ian Barrie, Ronnie went to the pub. He walked up to Cornell and, in full view of the other patrons, shot him in the head.

Nobody dared to testify against Ronnie Kray and after interviewing him, the police were forced to turn him loose. Frankie Fraser stood trial for the murder of Dickie Hart but witness intimidation meant that few would risk testifying at his trial. He was acquitted of the killing, but both he and Eddie Richardson received five-year sentences for affray.

By this time the Kray twins had formed an alliance with the American mafia, who had a particular interest in the gambling dens and clubs controlled by the brothers. They were darlings of the tabloids and seemed to be untouchable. With gang violence exploding across London, the Kray twins apparently had no fear: they had murdered a member of the opposing firm in full view of dozens of witnesses and yet nobody could do a thing about it.

JACK "THE HAT" MCVITIE

The murder of Jack "the Hat" McVitie proved to be the undoing of the twins, who were imprisoned for life

The downfall of the Kray twins began in October 1967 when the brothers devised a plan to kill Jack "the Hat" McVitie, an associate who had welched on a £1,000 contract killing. McVitie had pocketed the money, but failed to carry out the killing.

The Krays and their cousin, Ronnie Hart, cornered McVitie in a Stoke Newington basement and Reggie stabbed him multiple times with a carving knife. McVitie was a well-liked face around East London and marked a turning point in the story of the Krays. Little by little, people were willing to talk.

BILLY HILL

For four decades, Billy Hill was at the heart of organised crime in London

Billy Hill was born in London in 1911. Beginning his criminal career as a housebreaker, he rose through the ranks to become a notorious and violent kingpin of organised crime. In 1952 he masterminded the Eastcastle Street postal van robbery, making off with £287,000 (equivalent to more than £10 million in 2025), before moving into casino fraud. By manipulating the cards dealt to wealthy gamblers at the Clermont Club with a technique known as the "Big Edge", Hill was able to swindle the wealthy patrons out of millions. He even played his part in the mythology of the Kray twins, mentoring the brothers when they were nothing more than young would-be gangsters.

NIPPER

The man who eventually brought down the Kray twins was Detective Chief Superintendent Leonard "Nipper" Read of Scotland Yard's Murder Squad. Read had been investigating the gang for years and, with painstaking slowness, he built up a case against them. When the time was right to swoop, the twins were arrested, while members of the Firm were offered deals if they agreed to testify against one another.

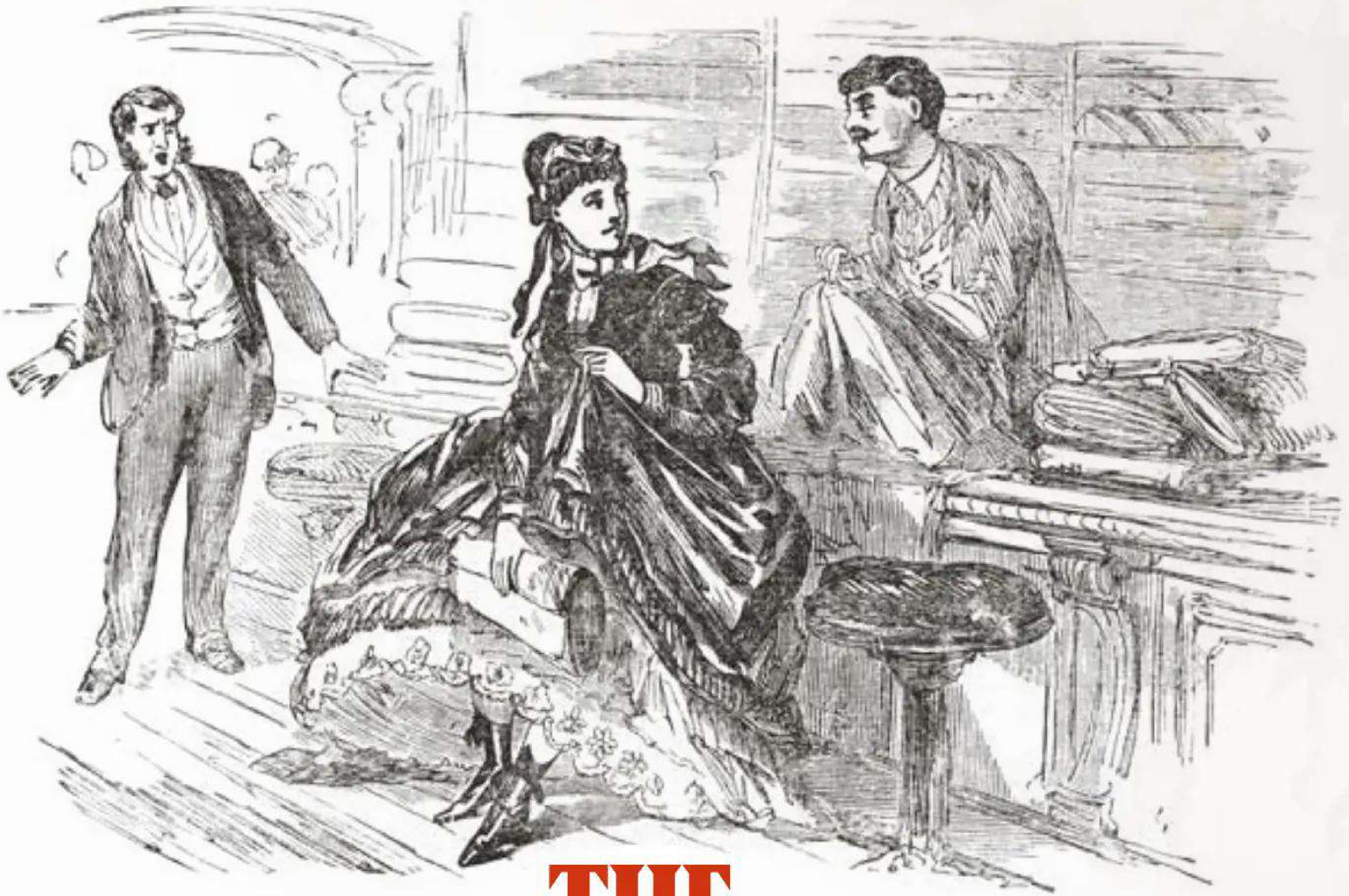
The trial began in January 1969 and continued for three months. Ronnie was found guilty of the murders of McVitie and Cornell, while Reggie was convicted of McVitie's murder and being an accessory to Cornell's murder. A number of their associates, including elder brother Charlie Kray, were also found guilty of various offences. The twins were sentenced to life imprisonment for their crimes: the death penalty had been abolished just four years earlier.

With the downfall of the Kray and Richardson firms, London's most famous feud came to an end. Yet there were other gangs waiting to take their place. Joey Pyle, an associate of both the Richardsons and the Krays, was known as the "London Don of Dons" by the mafias. He enjoyed a lucrative career as a fixer and a shrewd businessman who ran a number of boxing and gambling establishments. Pyle was also associated with the Nash brothers, who ran a firm of their own in 1960s London.

Today, gangs still stalk the streets of the capital with long-established names such as the Clerkenwell Crime Syndicate, the Hunt Crime Syndicate, and the Peckham Boys rubbing shoulders with new arrivals including the Hellbanianz, the Arifs, and the Woolwich Boys. There will be new turf wars and new feuds, as the streets once controlled by the Kray twins and their rivals come under new rulers.

Detective Chief Superintendent Read – the man who finally brought the Krays to justice

Gang leader Mary Carr was rumoured to be the inspiration behind 'The Maid With the Yellow Hair', by Frederic Leighton



THE FORTY ELEPHANTS

For nearly a century, an all-female crime syndicate robbed London blind, leaving the police scrambling to keep up, let alone put them behind bars

From their base in the Elephant and Castle, the Forty Elephants, known to some as the Forty Thieves, ran an incredibly successful shoplifting – aka hoisting – syndicate from 1873 all the way to the 1950s. The Forty Elephants were allied to the notorious Elephant and Castle Mob, which was an all-male gang. However, unlike that sprawling, unwieldy collection of villains, the Forty Elephants syndicate was run with all the precision of a military machine.

CRIME QUEENS

The first leader of the gang was Mary Carr, who was born in Holborn in 1862. Commonly known as the "Queen of the Forty Thieves", Carr was as famous for her charming manner as she was for her jewel raids, which she carried out in top-drawer hotels. After Carr's incarceration, leadership of the gang was shared variously between Minnie Duggan, Helen Sheen and Carr herself, but in 1915, a new queen came to claim the crown.

Born in Southwark in 1896, Alice "Annie" Diamond was a born organiser. She divided the members of the gang into cells and assigned them to targets across London; should anyone cross her, Diamond Annie's diamond-encrusted rings served as a useful knuckleduster when she dealt out punishments.

THE ART OF HOISTING

Dressed in specially-made outfits, which contained concealed pockets for stashing their loot, the Forty Elephants targeted the West End's fashionable stores. Taking advantage of the respectful attitude of shop assistants, who didn't want to be seen to bother delicate females as they browsed, the women helped themselves to goods worth thousands of pounds, which they dropped into the pockets hidden around the coats, muffs, bloomers and even hats.

Escaping in fast cars, the women passed on their booty to their male contacts before the police could catch them. As London went on high alert for their activities, they branched out across the South East and used the railways to their advantage, checking in empty suitcases at the station before filling them with stolen goods and boarding the train home. Their fences could provide false ledgers and receipts should the police ever get too close, leaving Scotland Yard frustrated and, it seemed, almost powerless. When the police did manage to finally make an arrest, the women usually served only short sentences, before going right back to the gang.

The Forty Elephants didn't only specialise in shoplifting, either. They took jobs as maids in rich homes and helped themselves to their employer's treasures. Sometimes they helped themselves to their employers too, seducing and then blackmailing the wealthy gentleman of the house. They also worked on the streets, with one gang member innocently asking a gentleman for directions, before the others approached and accused him of assault. Sometimes the victim would offer them money just to go away, but if he called for the police instead, they snatched whatever valuables they could see before running away with the bounty.

For the Forty Elephants, crime was a business. If anyone dared to commit crimes on their territory, the women offered them a choice: pay a percentage of the plunder or submit to a beating.

TWILIGHT OF THE ELEPHANTS

The gang rode high between the wars, with Diamond's well-honed strategies and loyal, well-trained members bringing in a fortune in stolen goods. Among its members was Eva Fraser, sister of the infamous Frankie Fraser, with whom the gang enjoyed a close association. Diamond Annie retired in the 1930s and handed over to Maggie Hill, whose reign ended when she was sent to Holloway for blinding a police officer.

The last known Queen of the Elephants was Shirley Pitts, a protégé of Diamond Annie herself. With ties to the Kray twins and Ronnie Knight, she was certainly qualified to lead the gang. It was a role she held until her death in 1992; the Forty Elephants, it seems, died with her.

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THE BLITZ MEMORIAL

Positioned in front of St Paul's Cathedral, the Blitz Memorial is part of the London Firefighters Memorial, and celebrates the efforts of the city's fire crews during the bombing raids.

LONDON UNDER THE BLITZ

Following his failure in the Battle of Britain, Hitler turned his attention to Britain's cities, and London in particular

The possibility of large-scale bombing raids on London and other cities had been carefully considered in the years leading up to World War II. Small-scale attacks on London during the previous war had served notice of the city's vulnerability, and with military technology having improved greatly during the inter-war years, there was fear that attacks would be far more deadly.

Most worrying for the population of London was the fact that air defences could not hope to stop enemy planes from attacking. In the famous words of Conservative leader Stanley Baldwin in 1932: "the bomber will always get through." This, coupled with Winston Churchill's rather inelegant description of London as "a kind of tremendous fat cow tied up to attract the beasts of prey," created a mood of foreboding as war erupted on the continent and British troops were forced to evacuate from Dunkirk. Nobody doubted that attacks were coming, and nobody doubted they would be effective. London could not be moved to safety, and it was too big and valuable a target for the enemy to miss.

In the event, the bombing of London was both worse than expected and not as bad as had been initially feared. Estimates of 25,000 casualties a day proved to be overly dramatic, but at the same time, the raids were far more intense and lasted far longer than anybody had believed could be possible. The Blitz would prove to be a defining event in the history of London. At the same time, it was its darkest and its finest hour.

The period of calm following Britain's retreat from Dunkirk, the so-called 'phoney war', created a peculiar mood in Britain. An invasion was expected at any moment, and only the gallant pilots of the Royal Air Force seemed capable of offering any resistance to the Nazi war machine.

London, measuring 117 square miles at the time, waited for the inevitable onslaught. It was more or less defenceless – there were only 264 anti-aircraft guns to protect the entire city, with most of the nation's guns being used to defend the RAF bases and factories.

Small bombing raids on London and other cities (Plymouth in July 1940; Swindon, Birmingham and Portsmouth in August) gave ominous warning of what was to come, but the public became accustomed to the wail of air-raid sirens, and when the expected assaults repeatedly failed to materialise, they even became blasé. On the night of 24 August, at the Hammersmith Palais, the orchestra continued to play with the backing of an air-raid siren and only a handful of people left. On the night of 7 September, that all changed.

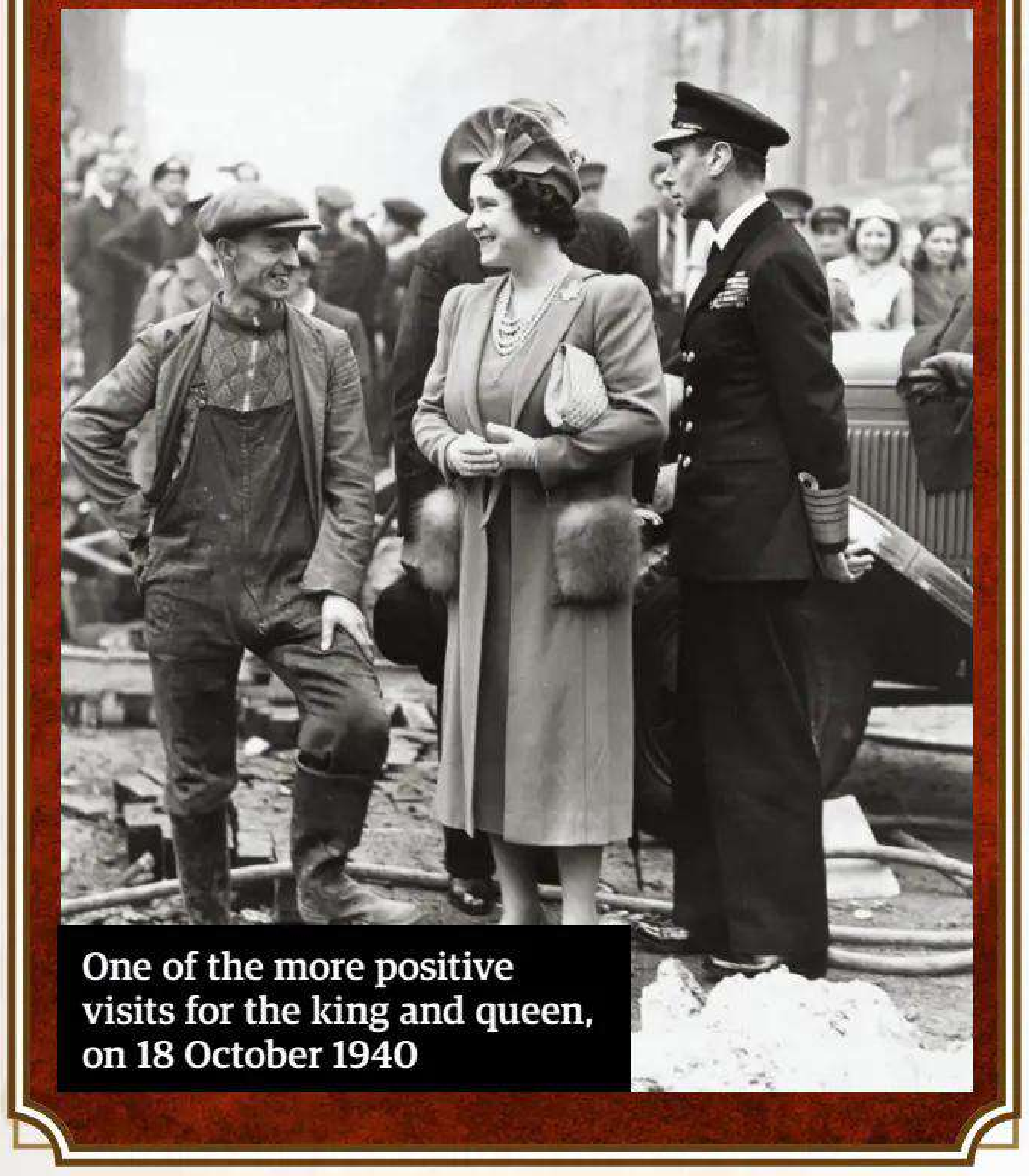
'Blitzkrieg' had already found its way into the world's vocabulary following the rapid subjugation of Poland and France. The 'Blitz', again drawing on the German word for lightning, was an entirely different approach to warfare, but the ferocity of the raids, and the level of fear they induced, made the name extremely apt.

Around tea-time on 7 September, the first massed bomber formation approached London.

FAMOUS FACES

Stricken areas were visited by politicians and royals during the Blitz, but they didn't always receive a warm welcome

Winston Churchill visited London's East End on 8 September to see the extent of the damage for himself. It was just the first of many visits by high-profile people, some of which served to boost morale (Major General Hastings Ismay cried when he accompanied Churchill on a visit, prompting onlookers to remark that he obviously must care about them), but others had the opposite effect (the King and Queen were booed when they visited the East End on 17 September).


One of the more positive visits for the king and queen, on 18 October 1940

The docks were the primary target, but other areas, including Southwark, were hit. A total of 348 bombers, escorted by more than 600 fighter planes, took part. Hitler, despairing of breaking the Royal Air Force by direct attack, planned to draw its fighters into futile efforts to defend the capital. The destruction of London's docks and the breaking of the city's morale was also key.

The intensity of the first major raid (the city had already been bombed lightly the day before) can be gauged by the number of fire brigade call-outs logged during the attack. From 3pm until 3.59pm, there were none at all, then just six between 4pm and 4.59pm. The following hour there were 122 call-outs. The hour after, 308. Fire crews struggled to get to the scene of the devastation; one fireman commented that the swirling embers in the sky made him think of the eruption of Vesuvius that had destroyed Pompeii.

Although the all-clear siren finally sounded, sadly the respite was to be painfully brief. A second wave of bombers attacked after nightfall, using the fires set by the first wave as guides. A thousand pumps battled blazes at Surrey Docks as German planes dropped 625 tons of high explosives, along with around 800 incendiary bombs. The destruction of Pompeii seemed a fitting analogy, as one fireman remarked: "The whole bloody world's on fire."

The twin raids of 7 September left hundreds dead and many more wounded. What was most shocking, however, was their duration. The second raid continued until around 4.30am the next morning.

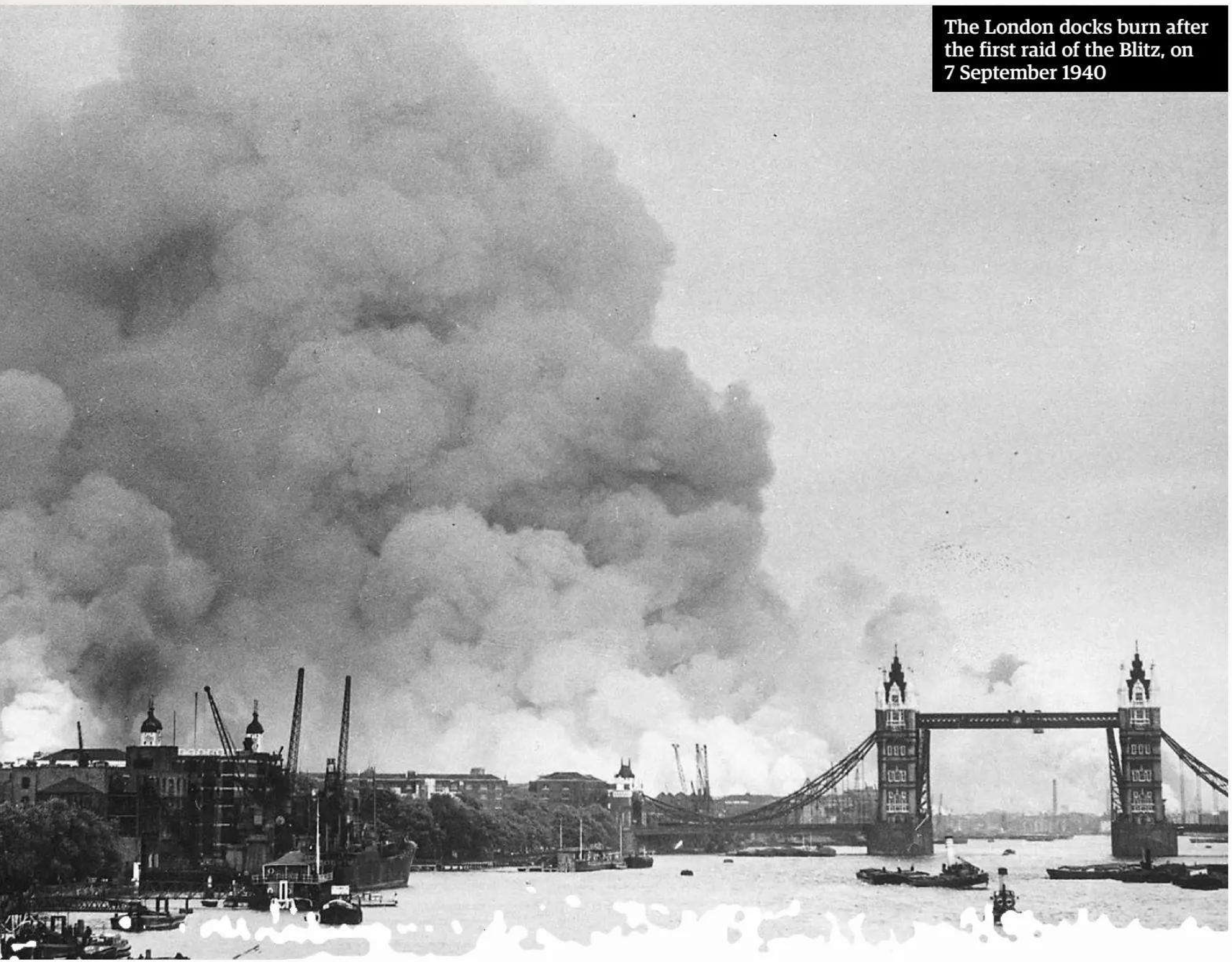
Planning for the raids, and construction of shelters, had not anticipated such long periods of bombing. Air raids were expected to be brief, so provision of sanitation, power and heating was not considered important. People were encouraged to use a sturdy room in their house, a basement ideally, as a shelter, or to purchase a build-it-yourself shelter for the back yard (provided free to those on limited incomes).

These Anderson shelters (named after Sir John Anderson, controller of Air Raid Precautions, but actually designed by William Paterson) were made of curved sheets of steel and designed to be half-buried in the ground of a back garden or other suitable area. Though cramped, they could hold six people, and offered decent protection if installed correctly, although they could do nothing against a direct hit.

Major buildings with strong basements were natural candidates for conversion into large communal shelters, but people also found themselves drawn to familiar sources of comfort. Churches, whether practically suitable or not, attracted many.

Some streamed out of the city as night approached, a phenomenon described by historian Juliet Gardiner as a "civilian Dunkirk," while others found safety in caves, such as the

> *"Although the all-clear siren finally sounded, sadly the respite was brief"*


The London docks burn after the first raid of the Blitz, on 7 September 1940

By the end of the Blitz, more than 2 million British civilians were homeless

A man stoops to closer examine the propulsion unit of a V rocket bomb

London's firemen worked tirelessly to battle the blazes caused by incendiary bombs

Chislehurst Caves in Kent. An estimated 15,000 people travelled there each night, and the caves became a hub of activity, with electricity and social events. There was even a cinema.

The night of 7 September was just the first of 57 consecutive nights of bombing in London. Remarkably quickly, Londoners began to adapt to their new way of life – fairly ordinary days for those who hadn't been bombed out, followed by long, uncomfortable nights in shelters. What was difficult to come to terms with, in the early days of the Blitz, was the lack of a response from anti-aircraft gun crews.

More guns had been rushed in by the second night of the attacks, but for the most part they remained silent as the bomber formations droned overhead, unable to get a clear shot at their targets. Londoners felt puzzled and let down, not understanding why the guns remained silent. After a few days, deteriorating morale demanded a response, and General Sir Frederick Pile, in charge of anti-aircraft defences, instructed gun crews to simply fire in the general direction of the German planes, whether they could see them clearly or not. The result was ineffective in terms of hitting enemy planes, but massively effective in terms of boosting the public spirit. London was "baring its teeth," in the words of the *Daily Herald* newspaper.

Anti-aircraft guns gradually improved in effectiveness as the Blitz wore on. In September, an estimated 20,000 shells were required to down a single German bomber. By February of the following year, the figure had dipped below 3,000. The RAF, having fought the Luftwaffe to a standstill in the Battle of Britain, was less effective in countering the night-time bombing raids, with no effective night fighter available.

GOING UNDERGROUND

Although discouraged by the authorities, London's Underground stations were a tempting place to find refuge from German bombs

BOUNDS GREEN

Sheltering in tube stations was not always the pleasant experience as depicted in this cheery image

What might have been considered obvious places to shelter – the deep stations of the London Underground – were not considered as such by the authorities in the early days of the Blitz. Solidly constructed, with electricity, they were theoretically ideal, but the government was keen for normal life to continue as much as possible, both to maintain the general public's morale and to prevent the economy from grinding to a halt. The Underground was therefore ordered to continue as normal.

Despite this, tube stations were used by frightened Londoners from the very first night of the Blitz, and such use was reluctantly sanctioned by the government after a week of bombing. In reality, there was little alternative but to accept their use – setting up troops outside each station entrance to turn away frightened civilians would have been a PR disaster.

There was a fear that people who went down into the safety of the tube stations might not be willing to come back up when a raid was over, but would instead adopt a troglodyte lifestyle underground. Such 'trogs' never materialised, and those sheltering in the stations referred to themselves by the less distasteful name of 'tubeites'.

Their numbers were small in relation to the population of London – only around 180,000 found refuge there at peak usage. The stations were also far from invulnerable, as various tragedies, including the deaths of 68 at Balham High Road in October 1940, demonstrated, but the image of hordes of Londoners sheltering in the tube stations became an enduring image of the Blitz.

With air defences offering only spotty performance, London seemed to be at the mercy of Hitler's planes, but a change of emphasis, with ports becoming the main focus of raids, brought relief. The weather also played its part – on one night, the weather was too poor for raids, and London enjoyed its first peaceful night since the start of the Blitz.

The punishment was far from over, however. A full moon on 15 November saw the bombers back in force and, following an unofficial three-day 'truce' over Christmas, 29 December saw the heaviest raid of the entire Blitz. Another full moon, now known grimly as a 'bomber's moon', coincided with a low tide in the Thames, which made fighting the ensuing fires all the more difficult. The result was the 'Second Great Fire of London', with more than 1,400 fires started, many of which merged into 'conflagrations'. Eight of the churches built by Sir Christopher Wren after the Great Fire of London in 1666 were destroyed, but St Paul's, though threatened by flames on all sides, miraculously survived. A photograph of the great dome, taken at the time by press photographer Herbert Mason, showing the cathedral's dome shining through rolling clouds of smoke, became a symbol of London's defiance. 'Britain can take it' had been largely abandoned as a propaganda slogan by that time, but London was proving that it could take a frightening relentless hammering and still go on.

By the end of May 1941, there were 2.25 million homeless people in Britain as a result of German bombing raids, with the great majority in London. The Blitz, however, was petering out. There had been four major raids (those unleashing at least 100 tons of bombs) in January, but bad weather had again intervened in February. March had seen the return of major attacks, but on 10 May the last official raid of the Blitz took place. It was one of the most destructive, with 1,436 killed, but Hitler was turning his attention east, towards Russia.

Around 43,000 civilians had been killed throughout the British Isles during the course of the Blitz, with around 17,500 Londoners dying. It was a far cry from the 25,000 casualties per day anticipated before the war, and the authorities had also been braced for many more psychiatric casualties as the bombing progressed, a nightmarish prospect that thankfully never managed to materialise.

Nobody in the bombed-out districts of London, or in any of the other British cities to be attacked, felt that they had got off lightly, though. Only 600 or so German bombers had been lost during the raids, and Germany could probably have maintained the savage intensity of the attacks for many more months had its focus not switched to Russia.

As is often the case, the end of the Blitz was only visible in retrospect. For the civilian population, there was a slow dawning of realisation that the worst had passed. London had taken it, but the war was far from over.

LONDON DURING THE BLITZ

Following its failure in the Battle of Britain, the Luftwaffe turned its attention to Britain's cities

4 Night raids

Although German planes target other British cities, including Coventry, Manchester and Liverpool, the focus remains on London. A full moon on 15 November provides assistance for the biggest bombing raid of the month. Famous buildings, including the National Portrait Gallery, are hit.

7 The last raid

The final major raid of the Blitz is a deadly one, with nearly 1,500 people losing their lives, and an estimated 11,000 houses destroyed. Landmarks including the Houses of Parliament are damaged, but London has survived with its spirit undiminished.

UNDERGROUND

3 Luftwaffe losses mount

As the campaign continues, Luftwaffe losses (mostly due to the RAF, as anti-aircraft fire is largely ineffective) and bad weather force the Germans to decrease the number of daytime raids from early October onwards.

6 Germany rethinks

German commanders become convinced that British morale will not be destroyed by the bombing of its cities. Emphasis shifts to maritime targets, including coastal ports, in an effort to cripple Britain's war economy, although raiding over London continues.

8 The final toll

After 71 major raids, Hitler shifts his attention to the imminent invasion of Russia, although London will continue to be bombed for the remainder of the war, including by V1 'doodlebug' rockets. More than 28,000 Londoners have been killed and much of the Docklands area has been devastated, but the sustained attacks are mercifully over.

5 St Paul's survives

The biggest raid of the Blitz comes just after Christmas. The 'Second Great Fire of London' is the result, with around 1,500 fires started. Many historic buildings, including 19 churches, are destroyed, but the survival of St Paul's Cathedral is heralded as a symbol of British resistance.

1 The first raid

Sporadic bombing has taken place before, and throughout 7 September German bombers arrive in small numbers, but around 5pm the first massed bombing raid takes place, with the docks and Southwark hit particularly hard. The Blitz has begun and London will be hit on 57 consecutive nights.

2 Finding shelter

The vast majority of Londoners shelter at home or in small communal shelters, but a small proportion take refuge in London Underground stations (including the disused Aldwych Tube Station), which are opened to the public after the first week of bombing.

© Getty, New York Times Paris Bureau Collection

LONDON TRANSPORT

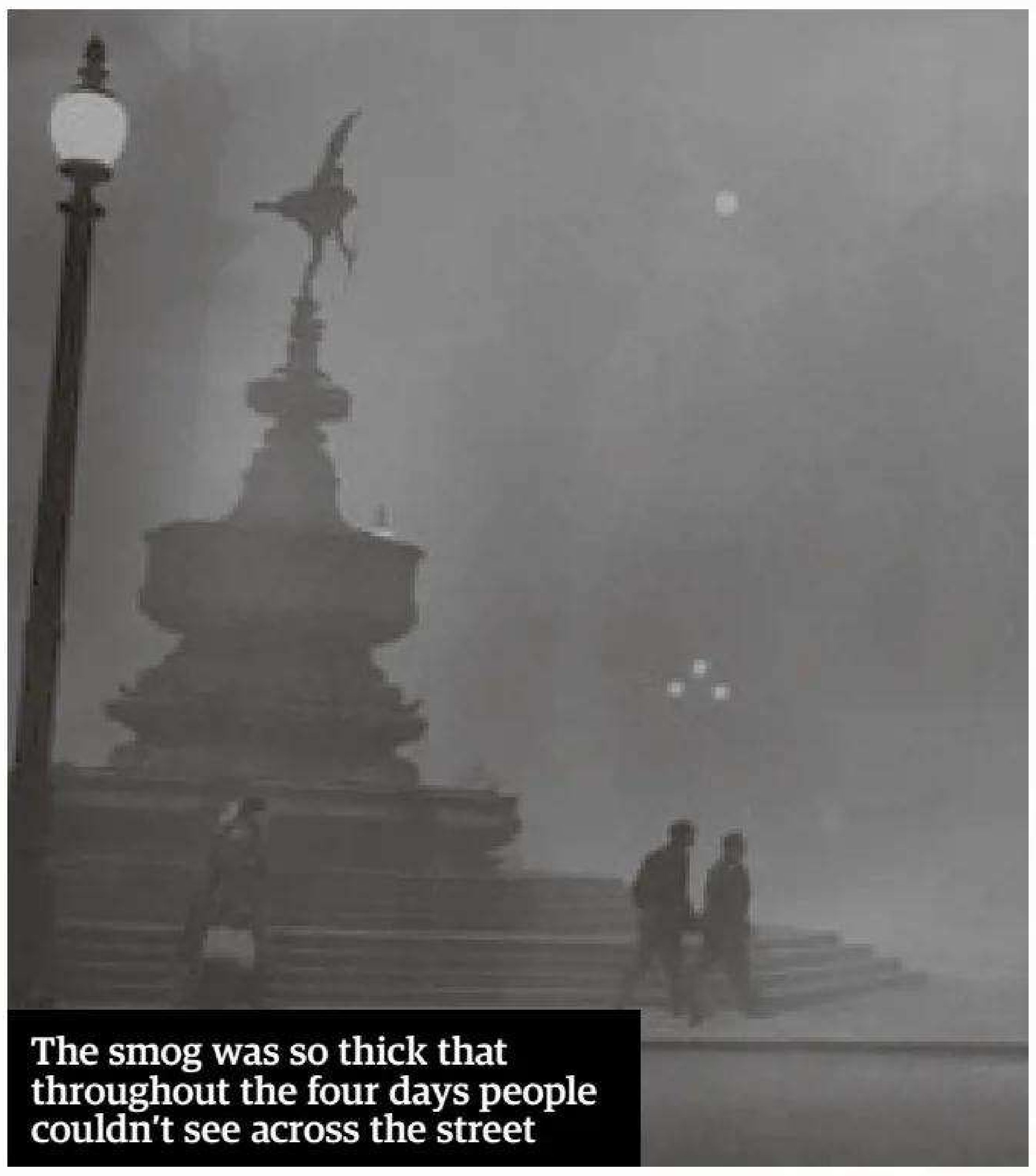
THE GREAT SMOG OF LONDON

Smog was a regular occurrence in the capital, but the smog of 1952 was the worst the city had ever seen

Smog was almost always common in parts of London; in fact it was considered a part of city life. Thick fog would mix with chimney smoke to create smog, and this would appear in the capital a number of times throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, commonly in the East End where there was a concentration of factories.

In early December 1952, British winter weather and lack of wind combined with airborne pollutants to create a thick layer of smoky fog over London that changed people's opinions on the pollution. These coloured clouds caused illness, damaged buildings, and left dirt and dust on people's clothes, but the Great Smog of 1952 would do it on a level not seen before.

The winter of 1952 was harsh, with cold winds and heavy snow forcing people to use large amounts of coal to keep themselves warm, releasing smoke all across the capital. Most homes in the city used cheap coals that



The smog was so thick that throughout the four days people couldn't see across the street

contained higher amounts of sulphur. As well as homes, vehicles and power stations all over the city were also producing large amounts of smoke. The cold winds then stopped as an anticyclone began to hover over London, this pushed air downwards. The smoke that would normally leave chimneys and then rise and dissipate was being pushed back down and there was no wind to help disperse it. This also meant the harmful sulphur dioxide contained in the soot was staying down in the capital's streets.

Between 5 and 9 December 1952, London was covered in a cloud of greenish/yellow fog known as a 'pea-souper'. It appeared almost out of nowhere and on some days it would be so thick that people claimed they couldn't see their feet or their hand stretched out in front of them. Parents were told not to send their children to school due to the risk of them getting lost on the way. The smog also reached inside some buildings. It was reported that some theatres and cinemas had to cancel shows, as people couldn't make out what was happening on the stage or screen.

Due to the cold weather roads were icy, this mixed with the fog meant that people had to walk slowly ahead of cars, guiding the driver with torches. This also included fire engines and ambulances. After a while traffic on the roads came to a standstill, planes had to be diverted and train services were delayed. The only means of getting around London was via the Underground or by walking.

At first, the people of London didn't panic as this was seen as normal, but days afterwards reports started to come in of the number of people affected by the smog. It was reported that by 9 December approximately 4,000 people had died as a result of the smog but many more could have passed away from illness afterwards. Later reports would estimate it to be around 12,000 deaths, this included people who died in the weeks that followed as a result of the fog. Most of the people who died were elderly, adolescent or suffering from respiratory problems before the fog emerged.

However, the Great Smog was important in terms of the government's view on environmental health, as in 1956 the Clean Air Act was introduced. This aimed to reduce air pollution by introducing set 'smoke control areas' where only fuels that didn't produce smoke could be used. The government had originally been dismissive of the problem, as smog was something that had occurred on multiple occasions before. But due to the number of people who had died during the Great Smog and thanks to pressure from committees, MPs pushed for tougher action to help tackle the problem.

A tugboat moored on the River Thames during the Great Smog

When completed, Battersea Power Station was the third-largest generator in Britain

BATTERSEA POWER STATION

Today it is seen as an iconic structure, but it was one of the biggest contributors to the smog

Perhaps the most famous coal-fired power station in the world, Battersea Power Station contributed significantly to the Great Smog. At the time of the disaster, only half of the structure was operational; the other half was near completion, but it was still burning a large amount of coal. The construction of Battersea was originally protested due to the size of the project and fear of it being an eyesore. However, due to its iconic look and appearance in films and on TV, it has become one of London's most well-known structures. To put the public's mind at rest, the exterior of the building was designed by famous architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, who also designed the red telephone box and Liverpool Cathedral.

The power station was built in two stages: A Station opened and started generating power in 1933, while construction of the second half didn't begin until after World War II. B Station eventually became active in 1953. Battersea was built in the centre of London on the bank of the River Thames so it could be close to water for cooling and delivery of coal was simpler. Today, the power station is under development. It ceased operation in 1983 and is currently being converted into offices, apartments and retail space, with its structure left intact.

© Getty Images

OCCULT LONDON

London is an ancient city thought to have a potent paranormal presence, with evidence of its occult past still to be found among its streets

Today, London is an ever-changing and growing multicultural business centre, serving as the capital of the United Kingdom. But with a history spanning 2,000 years, it's no surprise that it has always been home to a variety of differing beliefs, fears, religions and even cults and secret societies. As modern skyscrapers and glass buildings nestle between remnants of Victorian industry, the city's ancient roots can still be visited by those who wish to know more.

For example, the London Mithraeum, or Temple of Mithras at Walbrook, is the fascinating ruin of an ancient temple to the god, Mithras. Mithras was at the centre of a little-understood religion (Mithraism), sometimes regarded as a cult, and once regarded as a rival to Christianity. Born from a rock, Mithras was the god of friendship and the sun, maintaining the universe's cosmic order. A carving of Mithras was found at the London Mithraeum following its discovery in 1954. The 3rd-century temple is of continued fascination to archaeologists, as its excavation revealed thousands of artefacts, including marble sculptures of several Roman gods, shoes and writing tablets, with one from 62 CE recording the first written mention of London.

London's ancient history also concerns the prior presence of the Celts, a name that applies to multiple tribes found across Europe, Britain and Ireland. Some of the finest examples of Celtic art have been found in London, such as the Battersea Shield (350-50 BCE), which tantalisingly reveal a lost industry of art and metalwork prior to the arrival of Roman authority.

LONDON BEWITCHED

Witchcraft, in all its many forms and functions, is a continued presence in London. From healing and the prevention of disease, to curses and conjuring, a magical city has always thrived alongside its rational counterpart. The earliest Roman Londoners were known to carry amulets, believing their presence would protect them from infectious diseases such as the plague, which would ravage the population over the centuries. Hysteria over witchcraft ran rampant during the 15th and 18th centuries, where an estimated 100,000 people were prosecuted across Europe (up to 60,000 of which were executed).

In London, one name would become synonymous with witchcraft – Elizabeth Sawyer. After chastising her neighbour Agnes for hitting ▸

GOG AND MAGOG

These traditional guardians of London have been celebrated since the reign of Henry V

Also known as Gogmagog and Corineus, Gog and Magog are kindly wicker giants that are most recognised in statue form, as they traditionally appear in the annual Lord Mayor's Show. With a name taken from the Old Testament, these figures had enormous symbolic power to medieval Londoners.

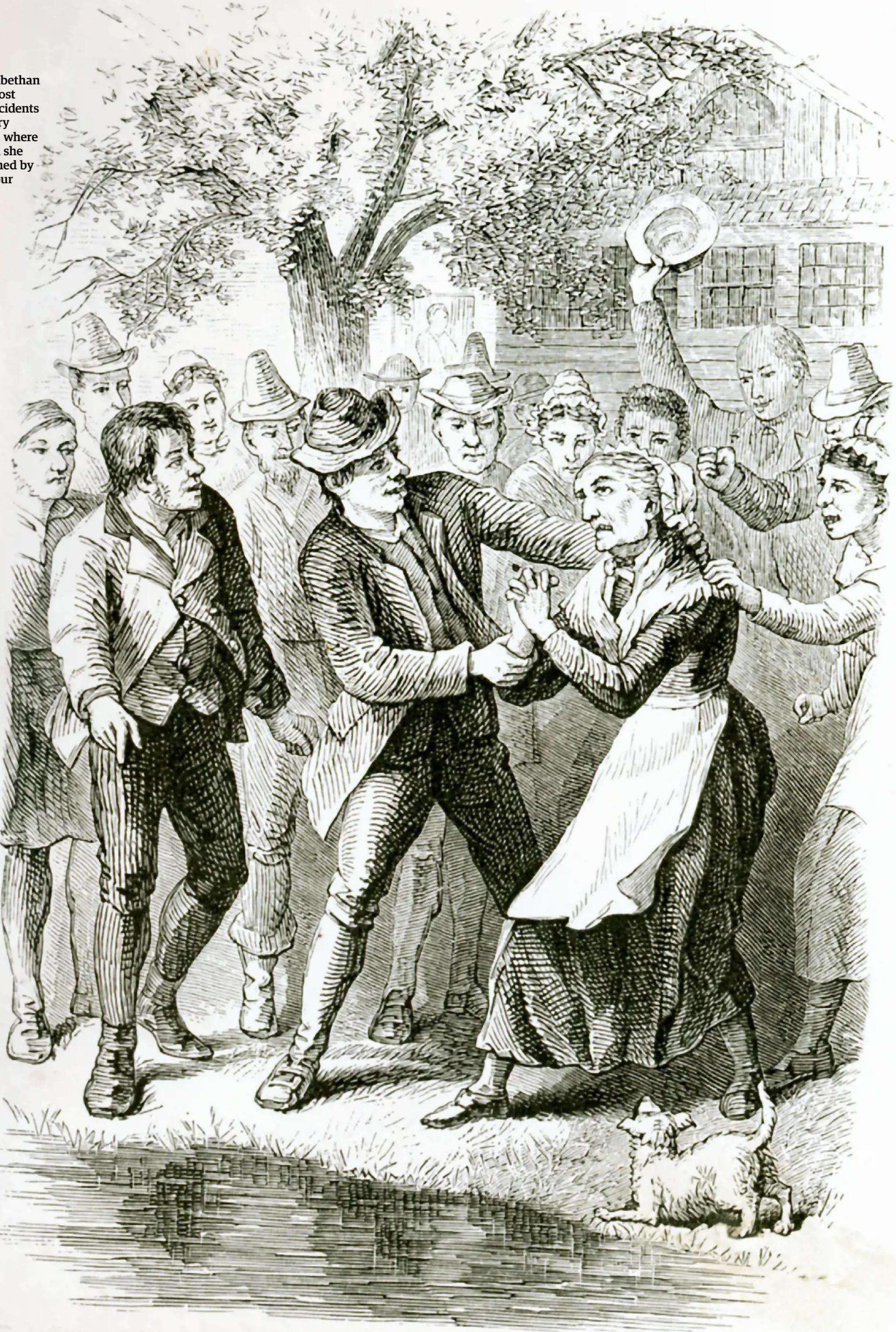
The legend of Gog and Magog represents strength, rebirth and honour

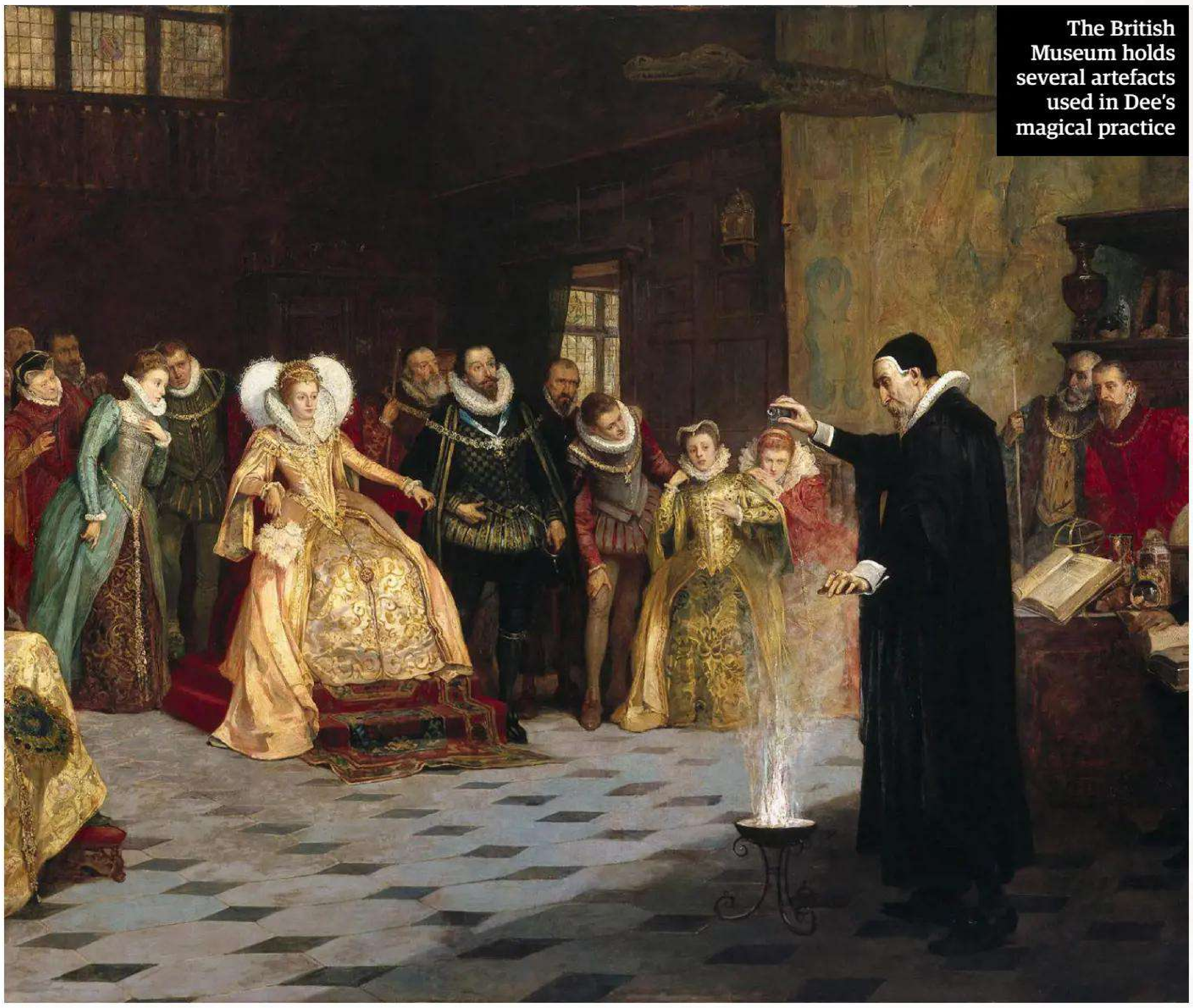
Many artefacts were discovered during the excavation at the London Mithraeum, such as the head and hand of Serapis – the Egyptian god of the harvest – shown here

Mediums such as Florence Cook thrived within London's Spiritualist community, here pictured with her spirit guide 'Katie King'

> "From healing to curses and conjuring, a magical city has always thrived alongside its rational counterpart"

One of Elizabethan London's most shocking incidents was the Mary Glover case, where she claimed she was bewitched by her neighbour





The British Museum holds several artefacts used in Dee's magical practice

> "Vast growth forced supernatural, religious and scientific beliefs to coexist"

her pig with a stick, Elizabeth's fate was sealed when Agnes died just four days later. On her deathbed, it was said Agnes accused Elizabeth of witchcraft, which was enough to bring her to trial. In a story that made national news, Elizabeth was charged and forced to confess that she was in league with Satan. She was hanged shortly thereafter. Yet not all witchcraft in London was to be feared. Witch bottles have been found buried within many properties, used as protective talismans to prevent evil witches from crossing the threshold. Often filled with urine and nails, they were in popular use for centuries.

ANCIENT ALCHEMY

By the Elizabethan period, the city of London was growing at a great rate, doubling from 100,000 to 200,000 in less than 40 years. This vast growth forced supernatural, religious and scientific beliefs to coexist as unhappy bedfellows. During this period, the persecution of witches began, resulting in the deaths of hundreds, while 'cunning folk' survived. These individuals existed in communities as healers, fortune tellers and practitioners of 'good' magic, aligned more with angels than any sinister forces.

While Elizabeth I was not as fearful of witches as her descendants would prove to be, she did establish an early witchcraft act in 1562, while simultaneously welcoming conjurer John Dee into her court. Edward Kelley rose as a prominent occultist and worked closely with John Dee, claiming to see angels through instances of mirror scrying (divination). Kelley also claimed to have mastered true alchemy, being the ability to transform base metals into gold.

Although Dee is regarded as the leading name in Elizabethan occultism, Simon Forman was an equally fascinating man. Forman worked as a doctor, astrologer and magician, whose medical achievements and studies were well documented during the plagues of 1595 and 1594. Forman was largely self-trained, with his herbal remedies angering the Royal College of Surgeons, who looked upon him as little more than a magician. However, following the death of one of his patients, he eventually received his certifications and became a prominent figure in Elizabethan London. Famed for blending science with alchemy, he also claimed several instances of prophecy – including his own death.

CAPITOL OF DARKNESSE

Nicknamed 'The Capitol of Darknesse' by author Peter Ackroyd (in his re-telling of architect Nicholas Hawksmoor's occult-adjacent life),

JOHN DEE

An alchemist, occultist, mathematician and astronomer, John Dee was a powerful figure in the Elizabethan court

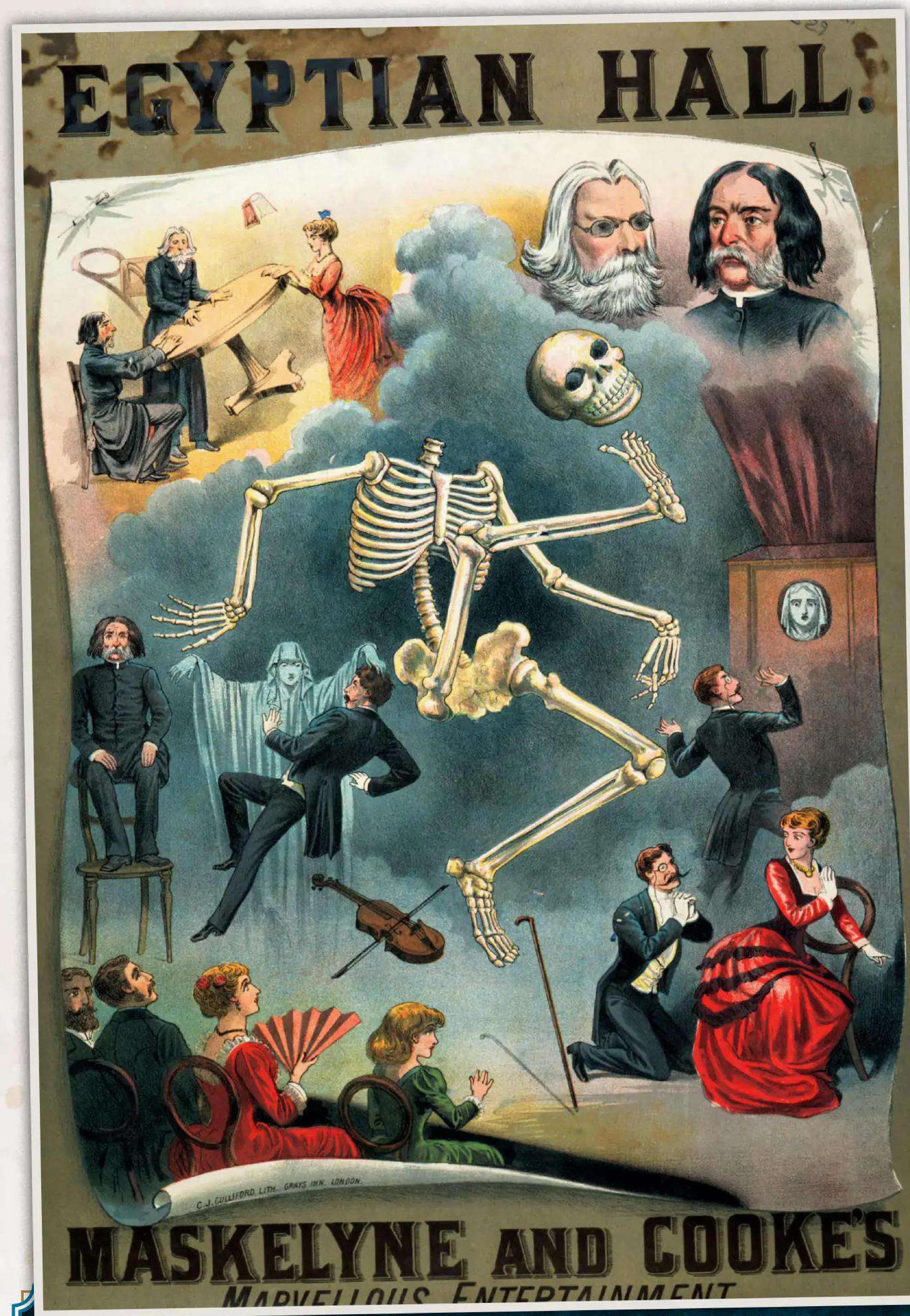
Alchemist Dr John Dee is celebrated as one of the most important occult figures in world history. Dee ultimately became an occult polymath, mastering several fields of science and chemistry, and ultimately taking up the curious position of 'conjurer' to Queen Elizabeth I. In a time where accusations of magic and witchcraft often brought a sentence of death, Dee managed to avoid such a grizzly fate by aligning himself with the intellectual elites, blending scientific discovery with spiritual development.

Born in the Tower Ward of London, Dee went on to thrive as a scholar at Trinity College Cambridge, before travelling Europe in search of prominent mathematicians from whom he could learn. Returning home, Dee's advanced knowledge of mathematics, astronomy, geometry and religion allowed him to fulfil an unusual mystical and rational role. However, Dee's role as both Christian chaplain and occultist resulted in a precarious and dangerous existence. Prone to arguments and secrecy, his reputation as a man of mystery and power grew.

Following Queen Elizabeth's ascent to the throne in 1558, Dee was appointed as her official advisor, specialising in both scientific and astrological methods. Dee's influence on the British Empire (a term he personally coined) was significant, as he offered technical insight and guidance for Britain's ships as they explored – and traded with – the world.

While amassing a substantial private library, Dee also penned many works of his own, including *Monas Hieroglyphica*, a work dedicated to explaining his own magical symbol, or glyph. Later in life, Dee's work was overwhelmingly occult in nature, as he immersed himself in methods of divination, particularly through the use of a scryer, whereby he – or another – would gaze into an object or medium and aim to communicate with other beings or with their own higher consciousness. Through this, Dee believed he could communicate with angels, and several books of angelic authorship were transcribed by this method.

While Dee had once thrived with his occult associations, a changing England was not so kind to him in his later life. Losing many of his possessions following years spent abroad, he lived out his final years in poverty in the district of Mortlake.


EGYPTIAN HALL.
C.J. CULLIFORD, LITH. GRAYS INN. LONDON.
MASKELYNE AND COOKE'S
MARVELLOUS ENTERTAINMENT

SPIRITUALISM

This modern belief system found a home in England's capital, where mediums were nurtured and exposed

Modern Spiritualism is regarded as an American import to the UK. Established in 1848 in Hydesville, New York, tales of mediumship and contact with human spirits travelled across the Atlantic to the UK, where they were met with excitement, curiosity and doubt. In an age of industrialisation and scientific development, many people were reassessing their relationship with God and the afterlife, and Spiritualism enabled people to find comfort in the reassurance that there was indeed life beyond death.

Following the arrival of American medium Maria Hayden in 1852, Spiritualism laid its roots in the UK, with some of its brightest groups establishing themselves in London. Initially, Spiritualist demonstrations took the form of knocks or 'raps' that responded to letters of the alphabet, ultimately spelling out a message. However, the movement developed quickly, and soon fully-manifested spirits were walking about the séance rooms of London, talking, touching and even sharing kisses with the gathered crowd. Yet as the movement grew, so did its grand claims and soon enough, magicians and sceptical bodies were incentivised to investigate these miraculous happenings. While some mediums made their fortune in the séance room, others were publicly exposed as being frauds, with their dubious exploits making newspaper headlines worldwide.

THE JUDGMENT
PAINTED WITH RELIGIOUS SCENES

The Mummy Museum at the British Museum, taken in 1937

THE BRITISH MUSEUM

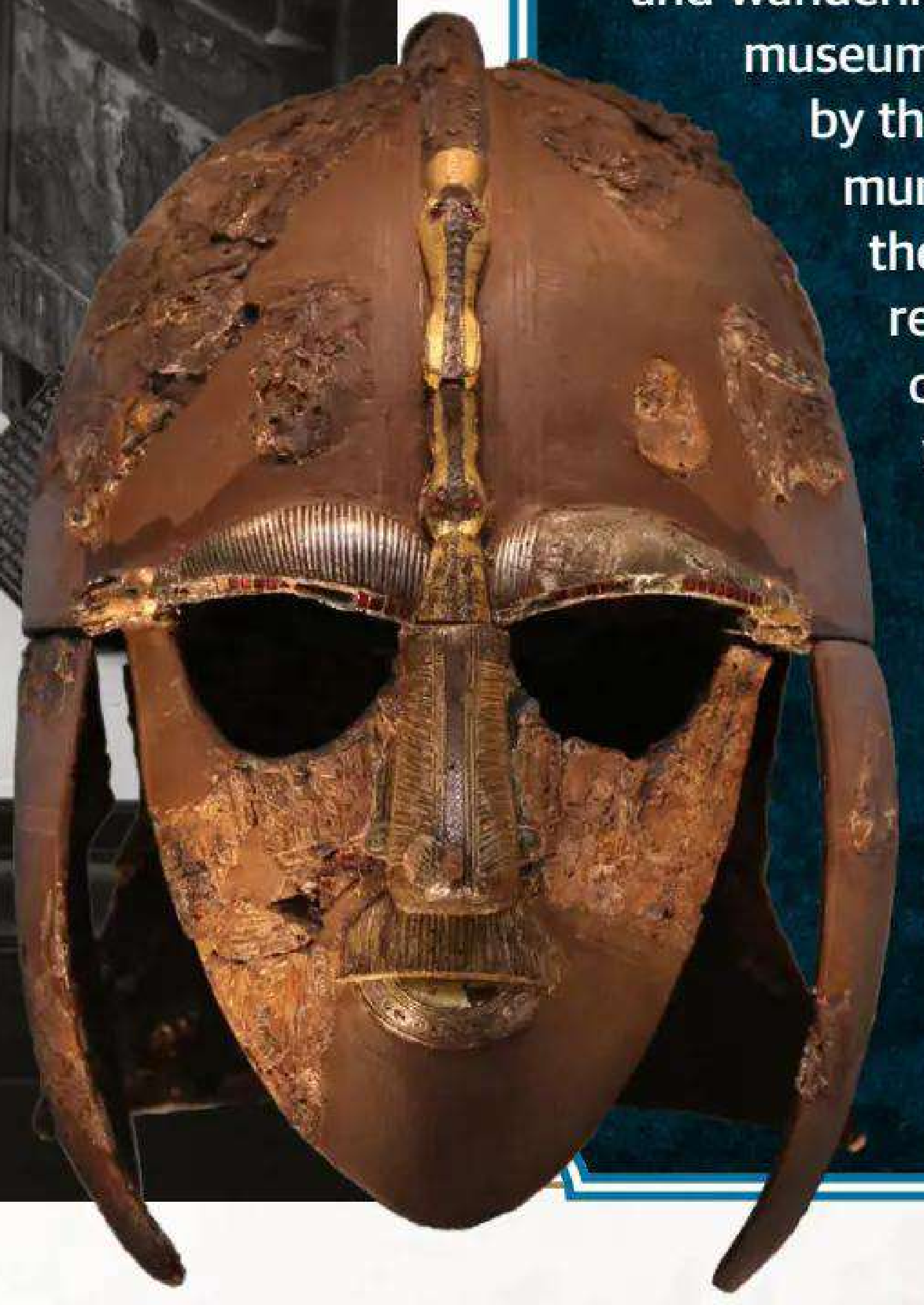
From magic mirrors to cursed mummies, the British Museum has more than just ancient artefacts

The British Museum is in possession of some of human civilisation's most curious artefacts. For starters, the museum's Enlightenment Gallery holds several objects attributed to Elizabethan conjurer, John Dee. A black mirror used for spiritual divination was attributed to Dee by the gothic author Horace Walpole, while his crystal ball and magical seals lay nearby. Most fascinating of all are Dee's magical discs, including the 'Seal of God', which are wax circles engraved with elaborate patterns and writing, presumably used in conversation with spiritual beings.

The British Museum boasts a substantial library of occult and alchemical texts, dating back thousands of years, where the nature of belief can be studied through society's changing relationship with magic. Many magical and ritual artefacts sit within the museum, including mystical English amulets that were worn and carried by wise women and healers, and monkey-skin bags used by the witch doctors of sub-Saharan Africa.

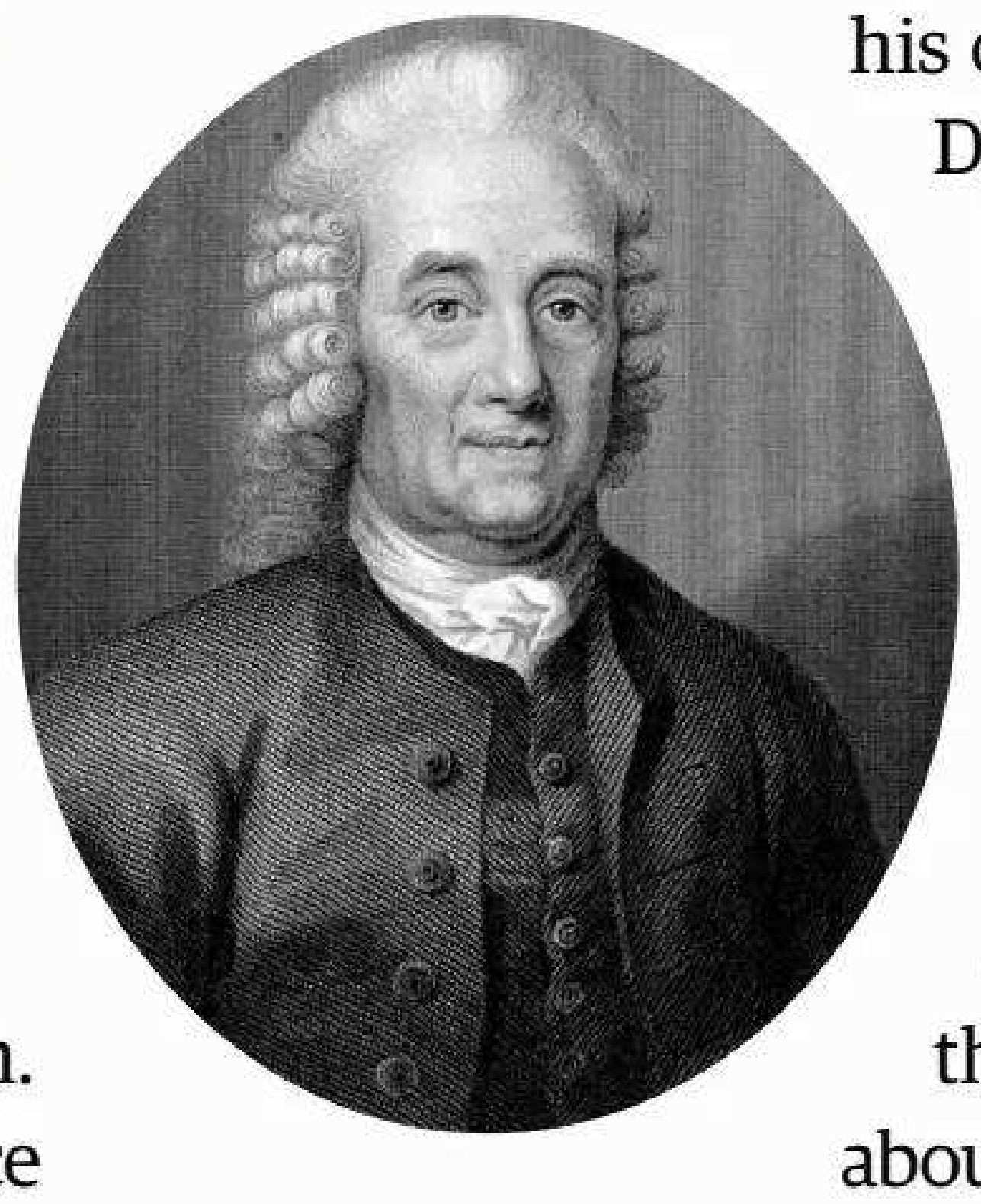
One artefact known as 'The Unlucky Mummy' developed a sinister reputation for bringing misfortune on anyone who interacted with it. Acquired by the museum in 1889, the wooden mummy board was famously being moved at the time of the sinking of the RMS Titanic, with a link between the two made by tabloid newspapers. Other smaller-scale misfortunes included the death of a journalist, who died three years after researching the board, during which he became convinced it was cursed. These associations were further developed by Arthur Conan Doyle, who publicly linked the idea of a 'mummy's curse' or 'elemental guardians' with those who died following interference with Egyptian artefacts.

With artefacts from all over the world, it's little wonder that tales of haunted objects and wandering ghosts are rife. Many museum workers report doors locking by themselves, strange winds and mummy bandages 'rippling' of their own accord. A Dutch couple reported capturing an image of a bedraggled girl on film, while psychic mediums have picked up on angry spirits, who continue to rage about their artefacts being moved. While belief is subjective, the amount of paranormal and strange reports from inside the museum are as multitudinous and restless as the ghosts they are about.



The Sutton Hoo Helmet is one of many British Museum objects regarded as a paranormal magnet

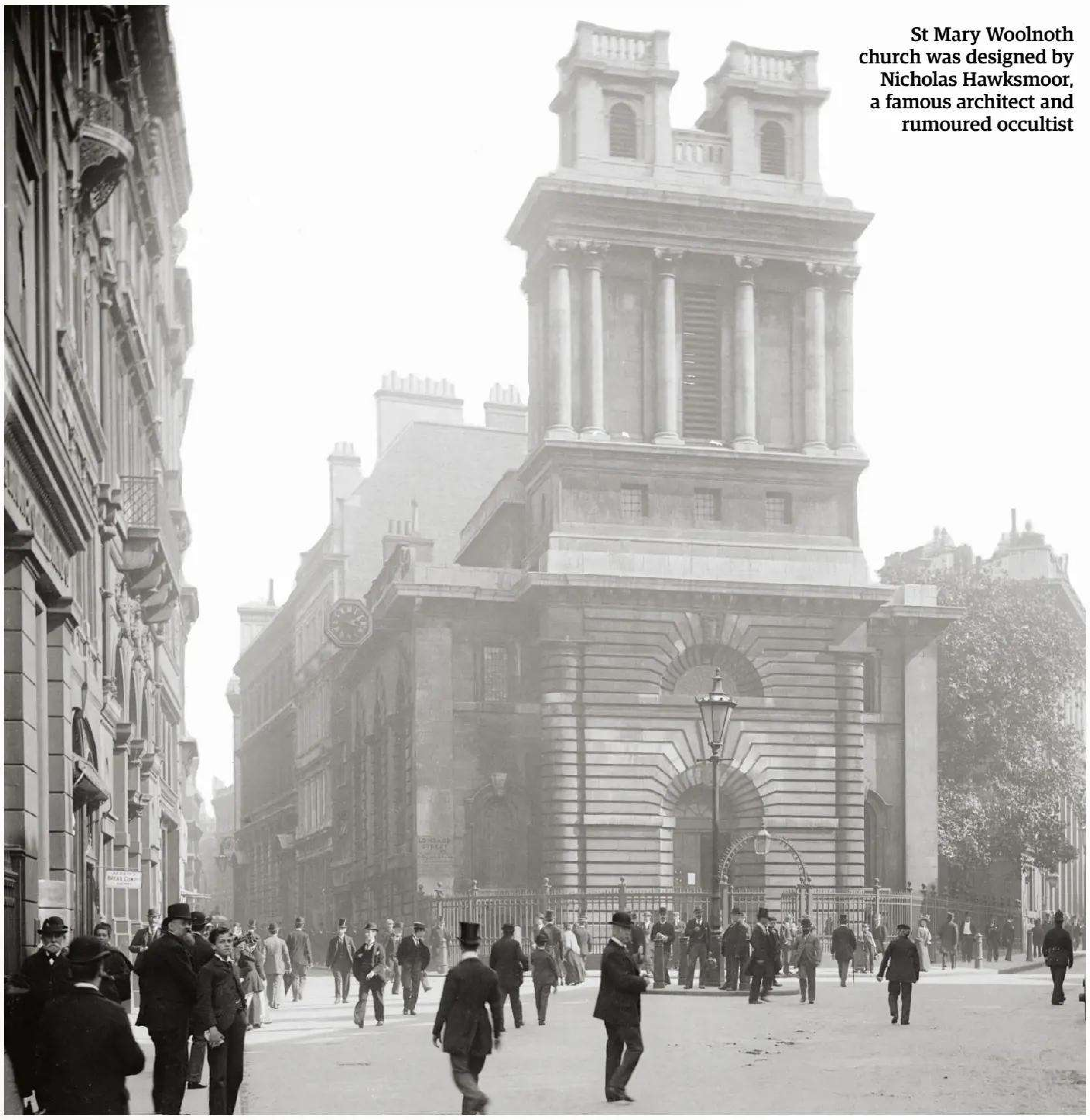
18th-century London has long been regarded as a melting pot of esoteric beliefs and practices. The capital played host to Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg on several occasions, where interest in his mysticism rose sharply. Swedenborg underwent a profound spiritual transformation following a series of visions in which he described seeing the entirety of the world and afterlife, and speaking with celestial beings. His writings heavily influenced the development of Spiritualism, while devotees to his work continue to celebrate Swedenborg through an active society based in central London. Also exerting strong spiritual influence was Swedenborg's neighbour, Hayyim Samuel Jacob Falk. A kabbalist and alchemist, he avoided being burned at the stake by German authorities following accusations of sorcery. His magical abilities were reported in many forms, including tales of transformation, teleportation and the curious ability to maintain a candle's flame. He was also reported to have saved London's former Great Synagogue by writing protective words on the door.



The poet William Blake was also a contemporary and was significantly influenced by the teachings of Swedenborg. Born in London in 1757, Blake's poetry and artwork would bring him enduring public successes, with some of his own work – such as his poem 'The Divine Image' – being heavily inspired by Swedenborg.

AN OCCULT AGE

Victorian London signalled a turning point in spiritual and occult practice, as modern developments in industry, scientific theory, and religious change brought about a more curious age. London was at the centre of the occult revolution, as prominent thinkers, spiritual leaders and new scientists all found their tribes within the city walls. Many men were drawn to this esoteric melting pot, such as Éliphas Lévi, a French ceremonial magician and writer, who penned over 20 books on alchemy and the occult. Lévi visited London twice and would prove to be of immense influence on Arthur Edward Waite, a scholarly mystic best known for being the ▸



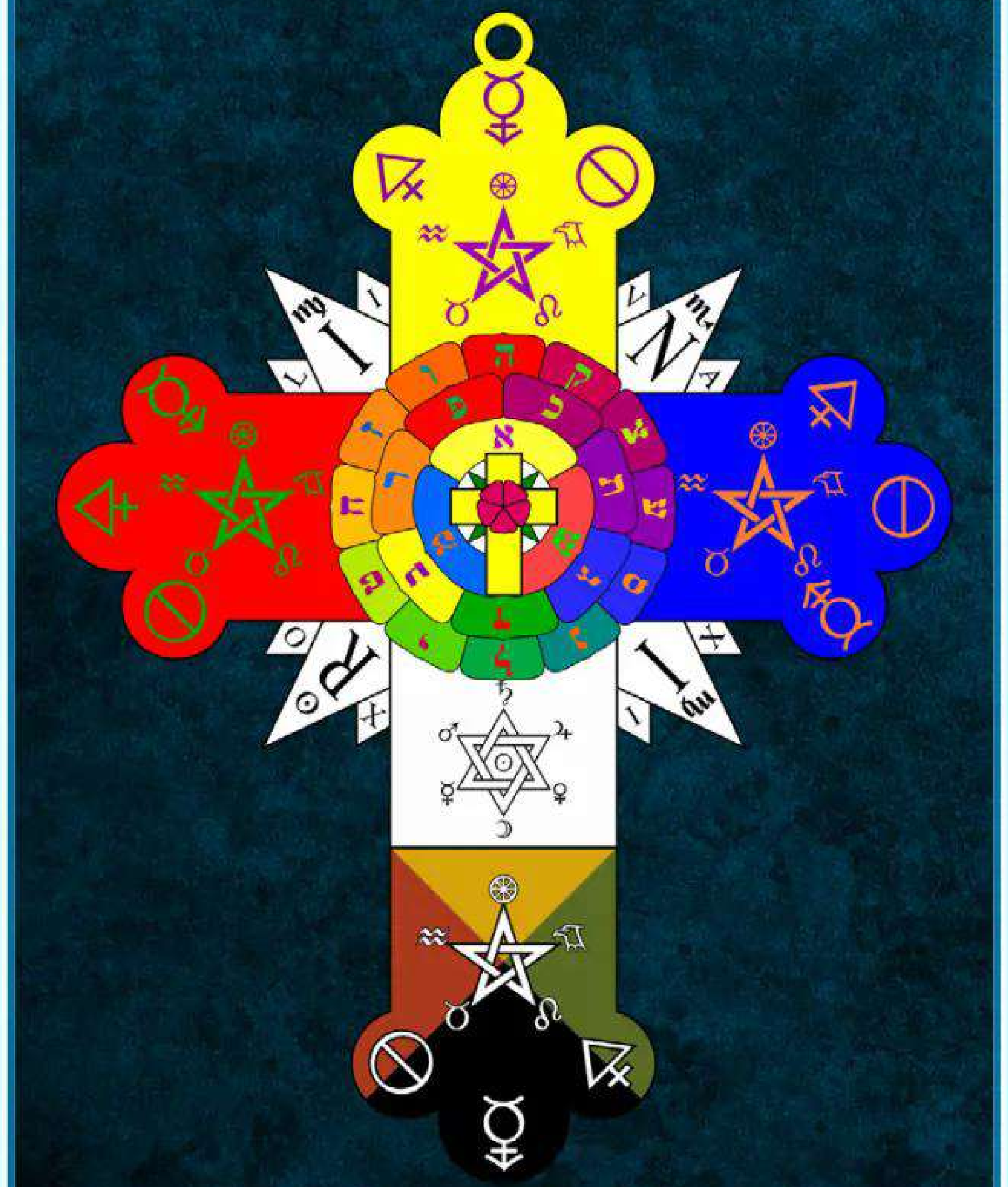
St Mary Woolnoth church was designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor, a famous architect and rumoured occultist

THE GOLDEN DAWN

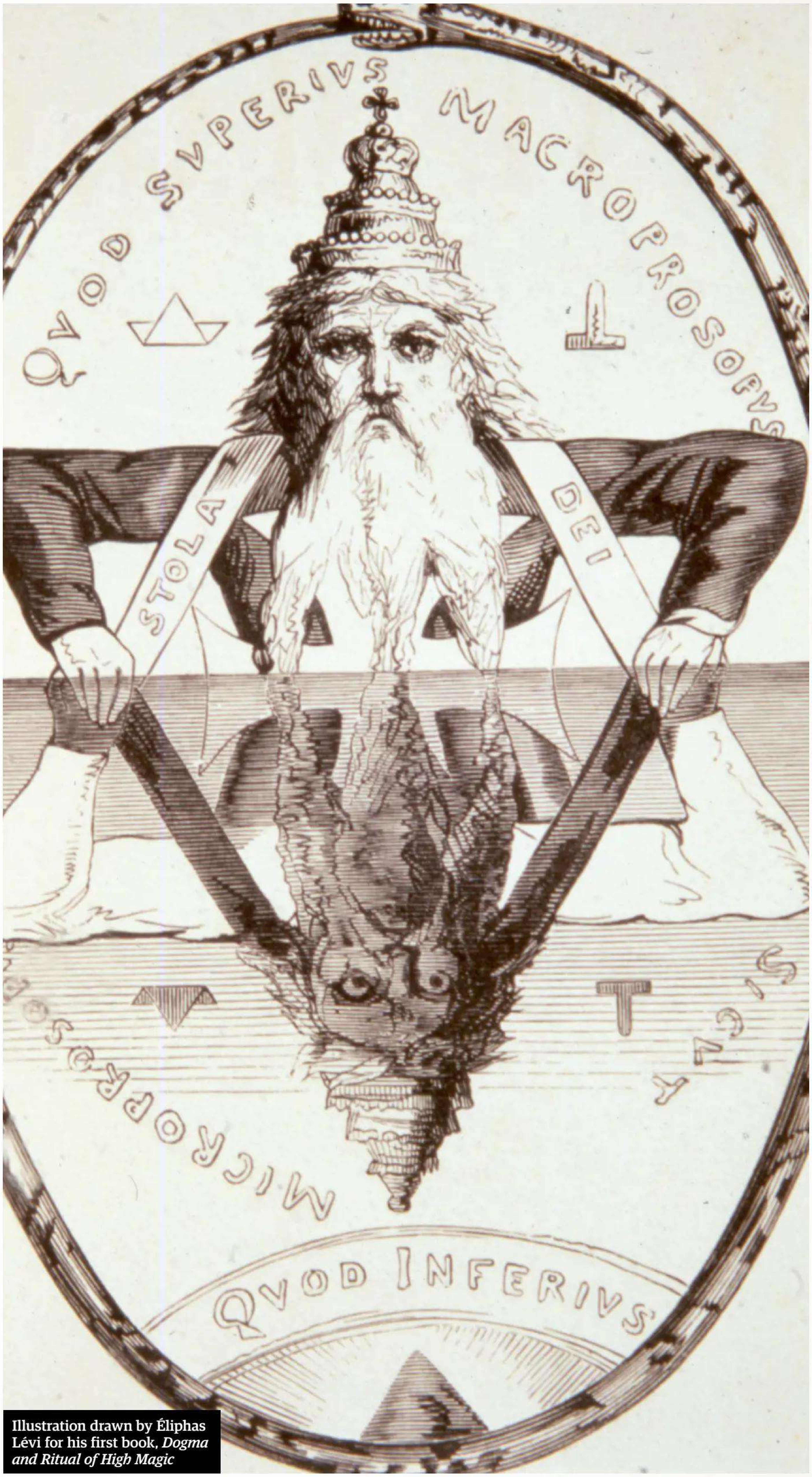
The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was an occult group that flourished in the Victorian era

The Hermatic Order of the Golden Dawn was a secret society that joined together elements from several belief systems, including Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism and Hermeticism. Much like Freemasonry, the order had a hierarchical system, whereby members would ascend through three levels of knowledge and initiation. While the Golden Dawn is not prominent today, its magical beliefs have influenced the development of other contemporary belief systems such as Wicca and Thelema.

The Golden Dawn's first temple was opened in London in 1888, where women and men were welcomed equally. Multiple temples opened across the UK, later welcoming over 100 members from various social backgrounds, including prominent figures such as author Arthur Machen, poet William Butler Yeats and occultist, Aleister Crowley. Crowley would later develop his own religion, Thelema, which was heavily inspired by his experiences within the Golden Dawn. Despite Crowley's later influence in Western occultism, his presence within the Golden Dawn was not always warmly received, ultimately causing the order to splinter at the turn of the century.



The Golden Dawn is regarded as one of the most influential communities and forces within 20th-century occultism


QVOD SVPERIVS MACROPROSOPVS
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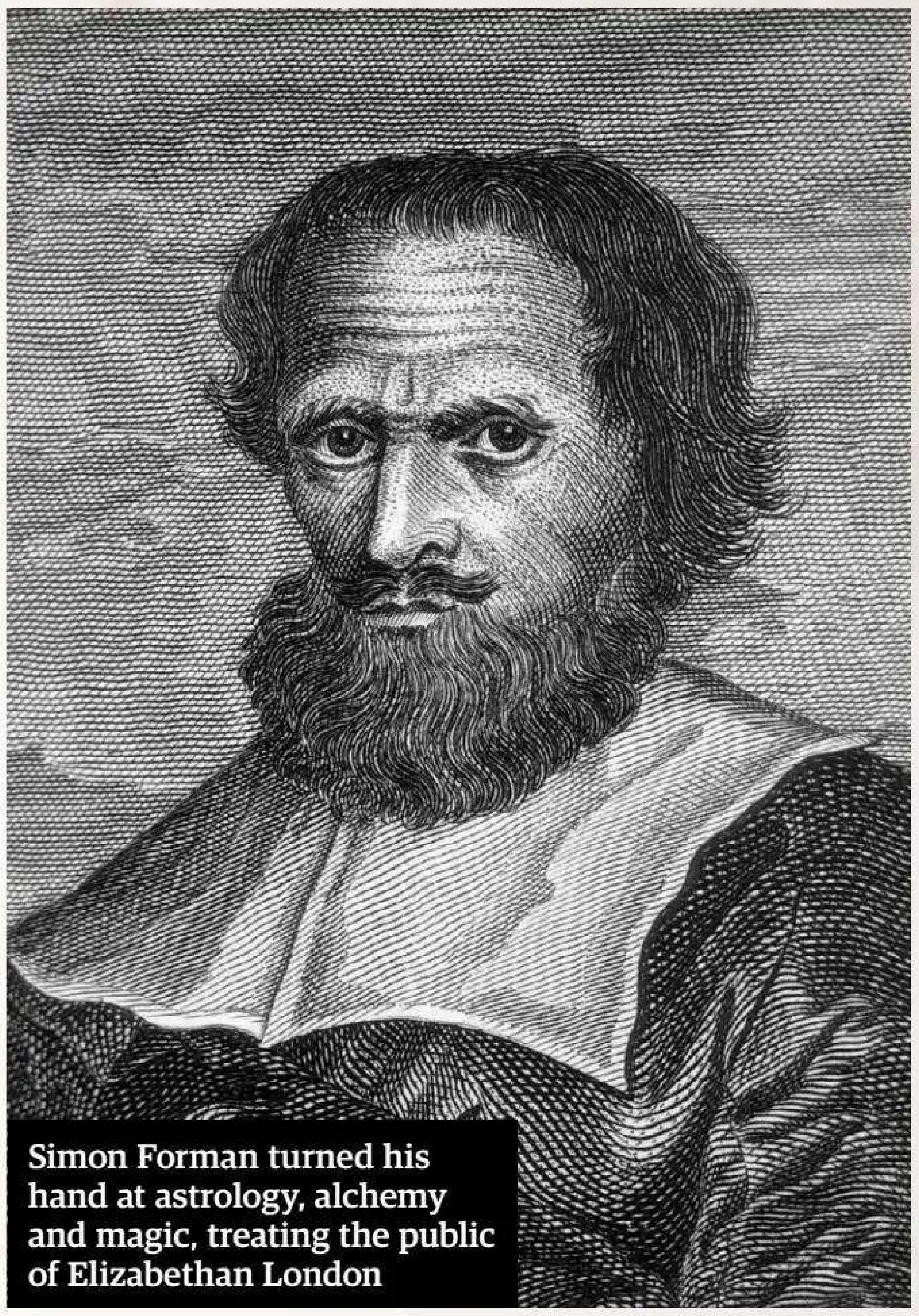
QVOD INFERIVS

Illustration drawn by Éliphas Lévi for his first book, *Dogma and Ritual of High Magic*

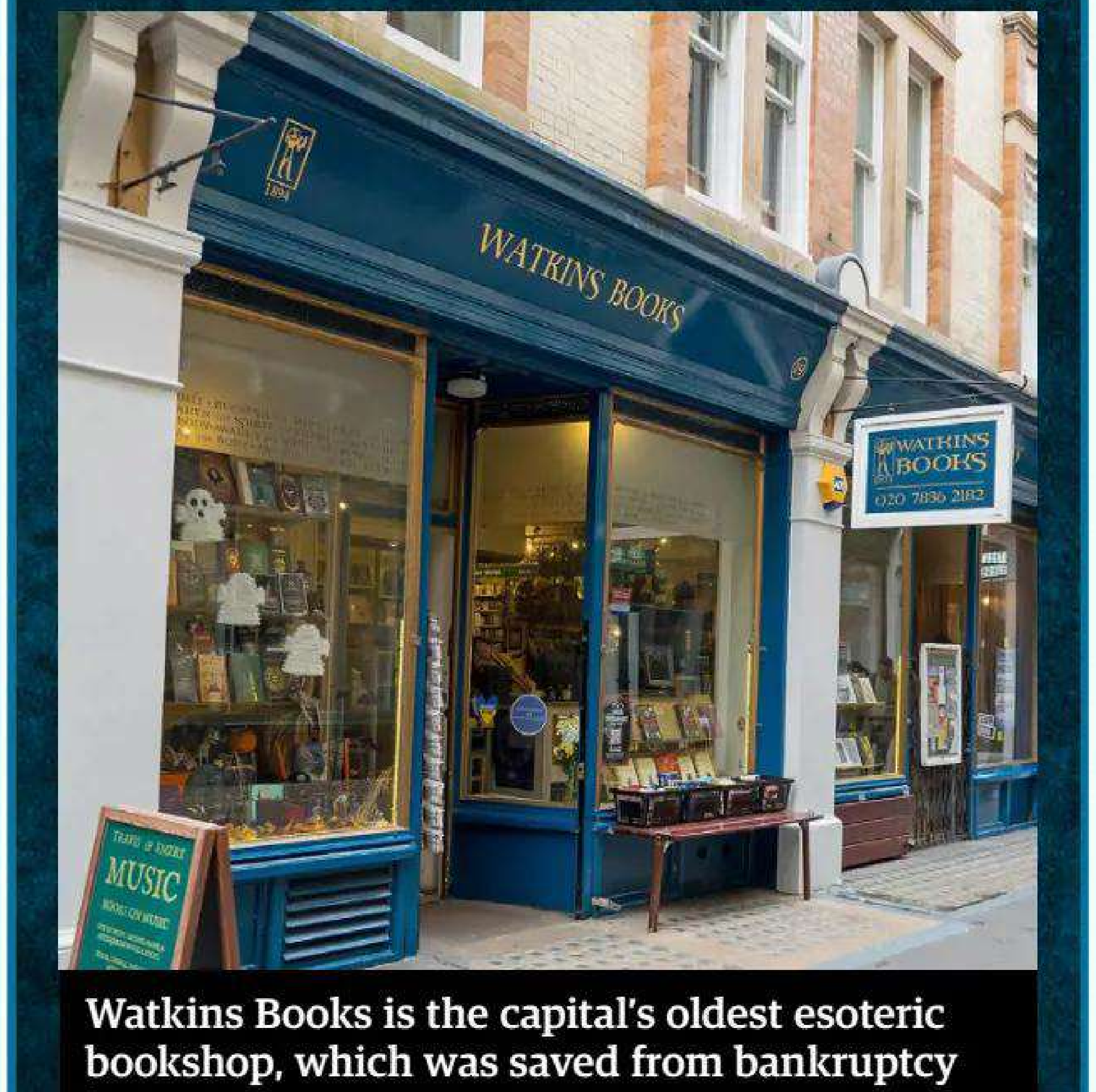


Simon Forman turned his hand at astrology, alchemy and magic, treating the public of Elizabethan London

BLACK BOOKS

London is home to some of the oldest and best occult bookshops in the world

Watkins Books in Cecil Court near Covent Garden opened its doors in 1893 and served Aleister Crowley and Golden Dawn member WB Yeats. The Atlantis Bookshop, on Museum Street in the Bloomsbury area of the city, was established in 1922 and used to host Gerald Gardner's coven meetings. Just around the corner from Atlantis, on Store Street, is the new kid on the block Treadwell's Books. Founded in 2003 in Covent Garden, Treadwell's is a modern hub of all things esoteric and regularly hosts events such as tarot readings and magical workshops.


WATKINS BOOKS
WATKINS BOOKS
MUSIC

Watkins Books is the capital's oldest esoteric bookshop, which was saved from bankruptcy in 2010

Mythical beasts adorn many London signposts, with dragons being a familiar feature on boundary markers

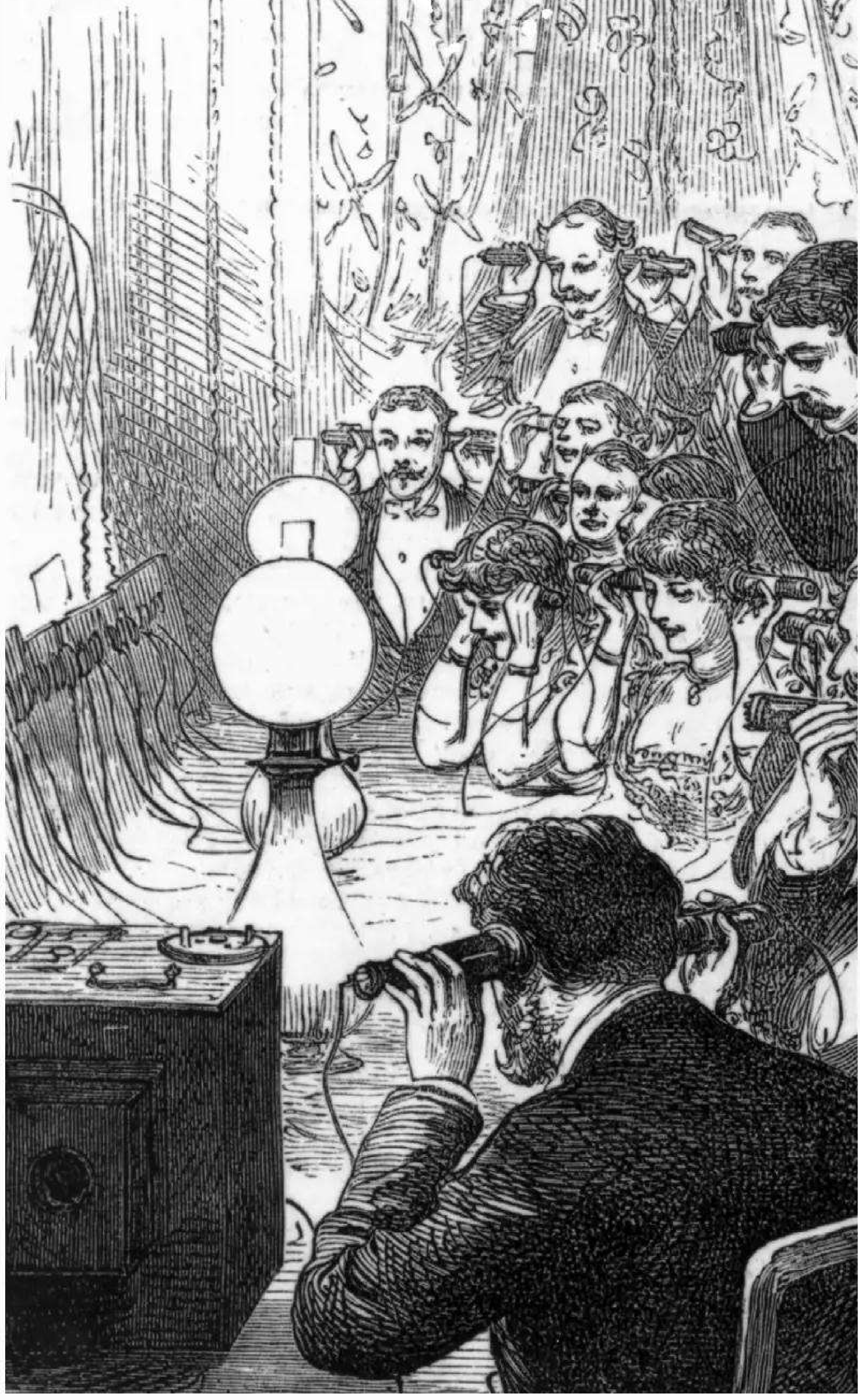
CITY OF SYMBOLS

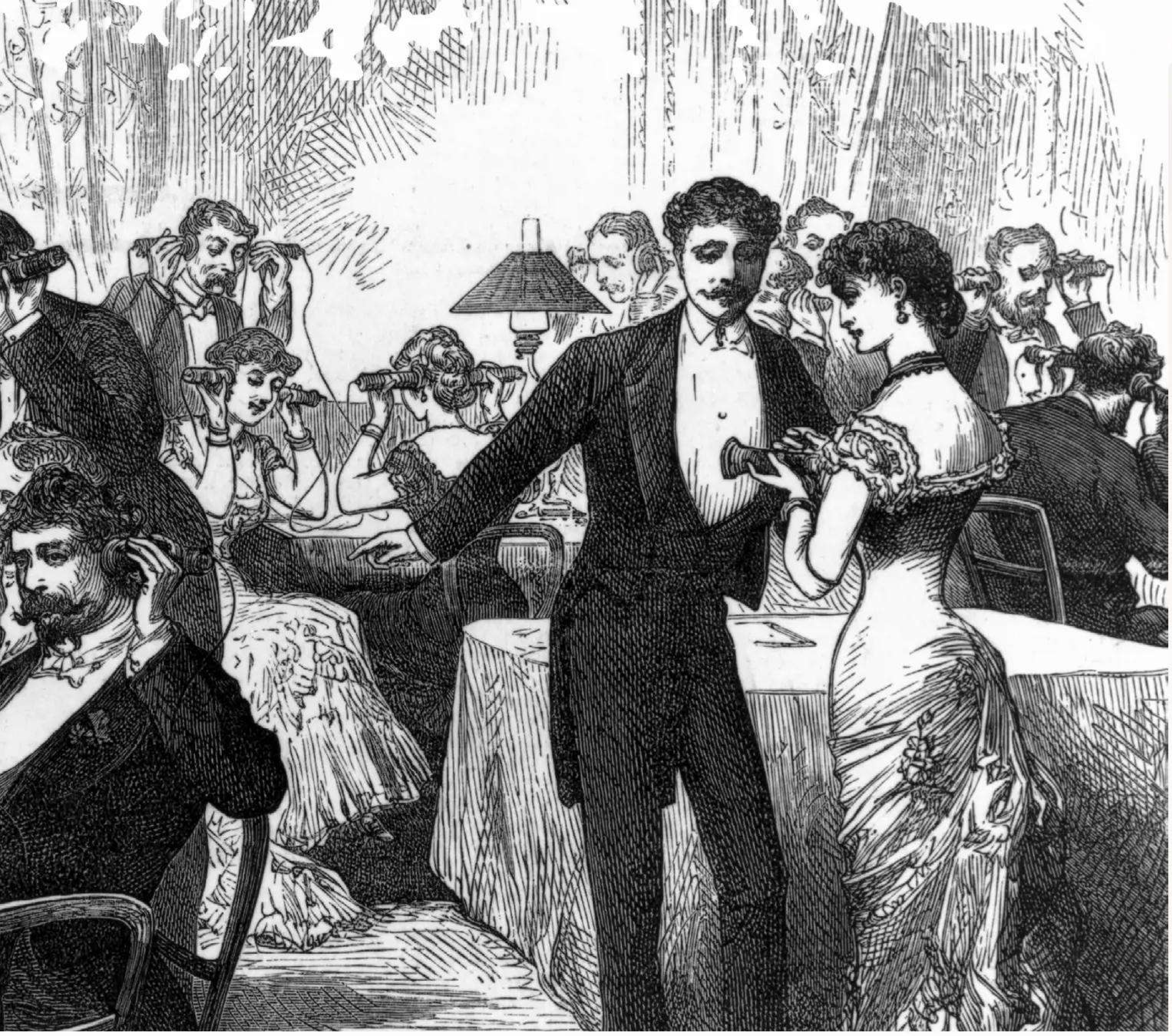
Hidden in plain sight, images and revenants of London's occult past can be found across the city

London is a city of strange symbols and forgotten histories, with curious markers of old beliefs hidden within the buzz of industry. While London's churches are filled with angels, the city also possesses a vast number of devils, including the 'Cornhill Devils', a set of terracotta devils that protrude from the frontage of a huge Victorian building. When plans were submitted for the building's construction, the local vicar was furious and lodged complaints, causing the architects to change their plans. The monstrous devils were still installed, but with one reportedly bearing a close resemblance to the vicar himself. A grand example of symbolism in plain sight can be found at Freemasons' Hall, which is filled – inside and out – with symbols representing the arts, good and evil, knowledge and wisdom. The Freemasons' symbol of a 'square and compass' can even be found set into the stonework of the Tower of London.

Ancient symbols are also commonplace throughout the city, with symbols of ancient Egypt adorning buildings and riverbanks alike. Cleopatra's Needle, a 3,500 year-old obelisk can be found on the Thames Embankment, after it was given to Britain as a gift in the 19th century. Obelisks were often made as monuments to be placed by ancient temples, with London's example covered with symbols representing pharaoh Thutmose III. Following Victorian England's bout of 'Egyptomania', Egyptian symbolism became incredibly popular in cemetery design, with countless grand tombs covered in hieroglyphs, scarabs and pyramids. In London's Brompton Cemetery, the tomb of Hannah Courtoy is covered in Egyptian symbolism, with many believing it is also a secret time machine!

Not all symbolism is ancient, with the Underground system inspiring many contemporary artists with its maze-like structures. Artist Mark Wallinger installed a series of 270 maze designs throughout the tube network, exploring his own fascination with being 'transported'.





The ability to speak through a wire delighted the Victorians, who pondered whether a telephone could communicate with the dead. Telephone séances became very popular

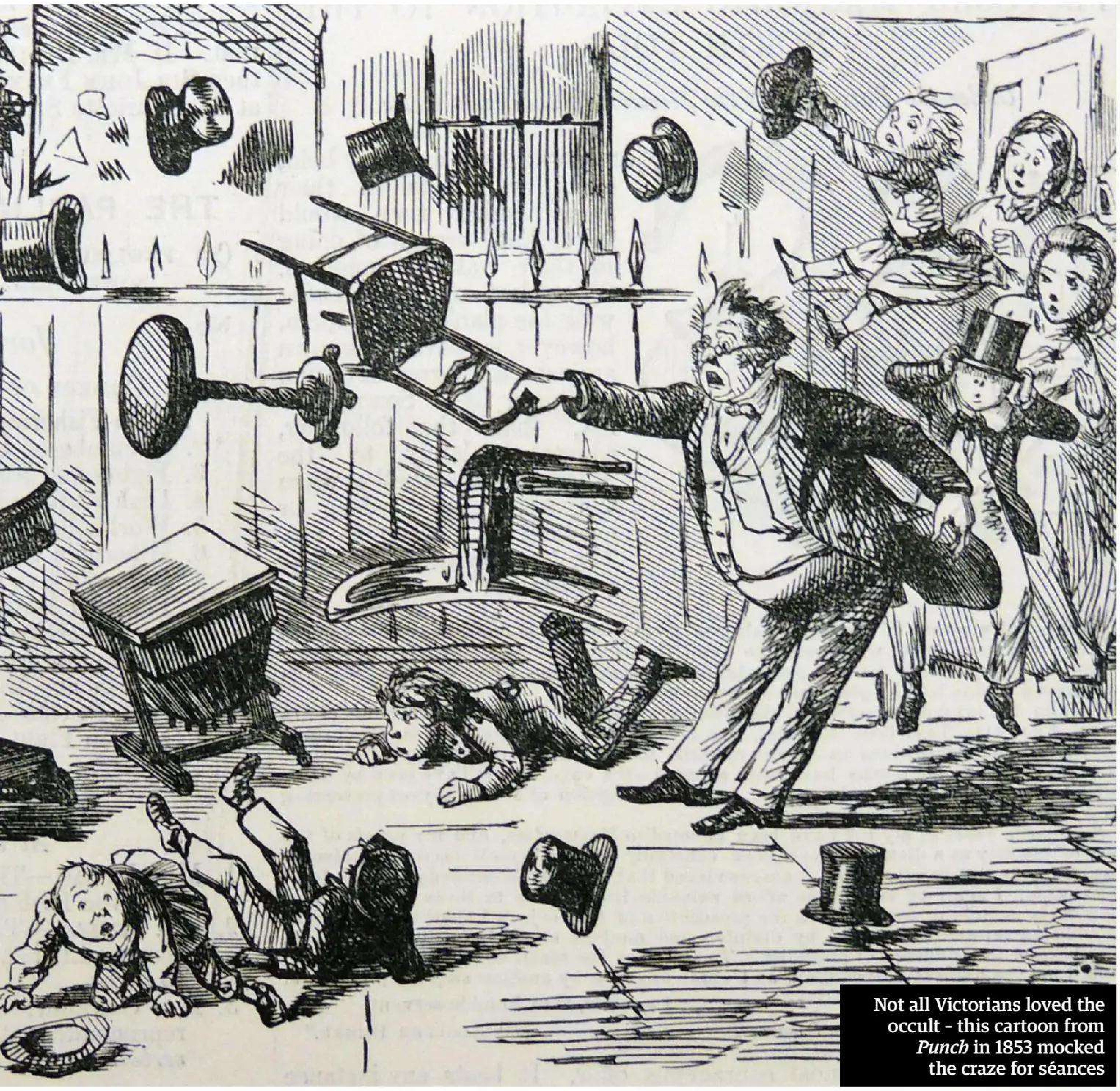
co-creator of the Rider-Waite Tarot deck. Waite's own work was deeply influenced by London's many secret societies, such as the Golden Dawn and higher grades of Freemasonry.

Regarded as the father of modern witchcraft, Gerald Gardner chose London as the ideal location from which to promote the new religion of Wicca. Gardner supplemented existing magical beliefs with his own ideas, taken from the likes of Aleister Crowley and Freemasonry, and established his own tradition of Wicca that continues to be practiced.

Of course, it wasn't just men who came to London for its occult offerings. Dion Fortune was also drawn to London, where she co-founded the Fraternity of the Inner Light; an organisation founded on her own teachings which were said to have been told to her by celestial 'Ascended Masters'. Prominent mystic Helena Blavatsky also developed strong ties to London in the 19th century, establishing her co-created belief system of Theosophy within the capital. Theosophy was described by Blavatsky as "the synthesis of science, religion and philosophy", promoting it as an ancient religion from which all other beliefs drew influence. Theosophy's first lodge, and the later Blavatsky Lodge, were both established in London, and although neither of them exist today, the Theosophical Society still promote and follow her teachings.

As Spiritualism grew as a new Victorian belief system, séance rooms and professional mediums emerged around the country, bringing excitement to onlookers and solace to the bereaved. In lieu of official recognition as a religion, and in need of a central hub and organisational body, Spiritualists established institutions such as The Spiritualist Association of Great Britain in 1872. Endorsed by Arthur Conan Doyle, the SAGB continues to open its doors to all who are curious and offers private mediumship readings on a daily basis.

In tandem with Spiritualism, institutions dedicated to the scientific study of spirits, ghosts and claims of psychic abilities began to emerge. The Society for Psychical Research was established in 1882, with a view to investigate "human experiences that challenge contemporary scientific models", and maintains a high quality of academic research today. Prior to this, a group of ghost-curious scholars at Cambridge University established 'The Ghost Club'. With an original membership that included Charles Dickens, the Ghost Club underwent several incarnations, but remains active today.

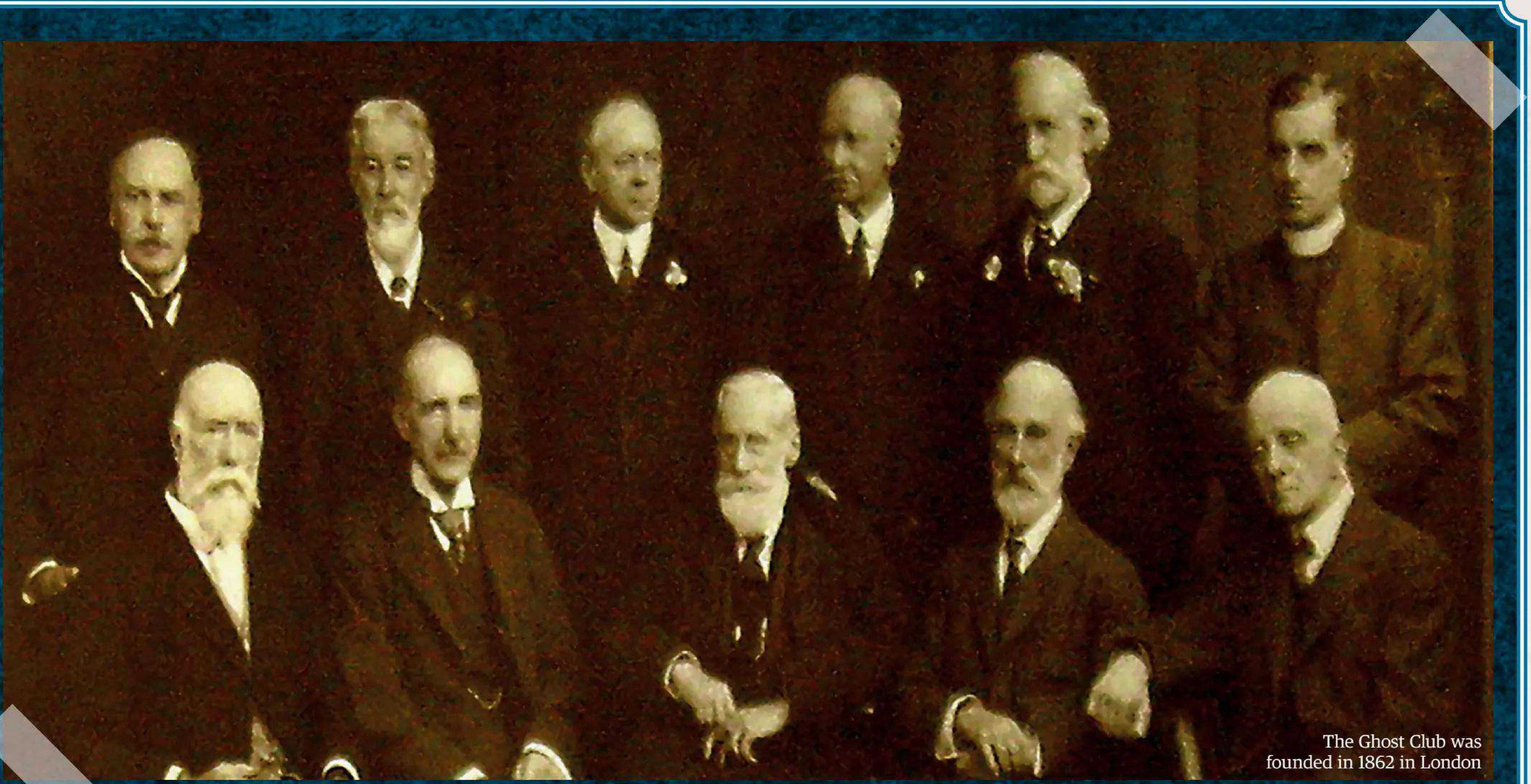


Not all Victorians loved the occult – this cartoon from *Punch* in 1853 mocked the craze for séances

"It's a place where sceptics and believers can meet on common ground"

Reverand Stainton Moses, who revived The Ghost Club in 1882 along with also being a member of the clergy and a medium

2 x Images source: The Ghost Club



The Ghost Club was founded in 1862 in London

PARANORMAL INVESTIGATORS

We talk to Alan Murdie, chairman of Britain's oldest ghost hunting society, The Ghost Club

What exactly is The Ghost Club and what is its mission?

The Ghost Club is essentially a private body of friends and members who are particularly interested in ghosts and the paranormal. It's a place where sceptics and believers can meet on common ground. We don't have any collective opinion, but provide a forum and meeting place where people who are interested in the subject can debate and discuss on a social basis. We also conduct our own investigations and research from time to time, looking into both the scientific and the cultural sides of ghosts and the paranormal. We primarily investigate accounts in Great Britain but we're also interested in reports of phenomena abroad. I like to think we preserve and celebrate some of our cultural traditions and history of ghosts.

Can you tell us a little about the organisation's history?

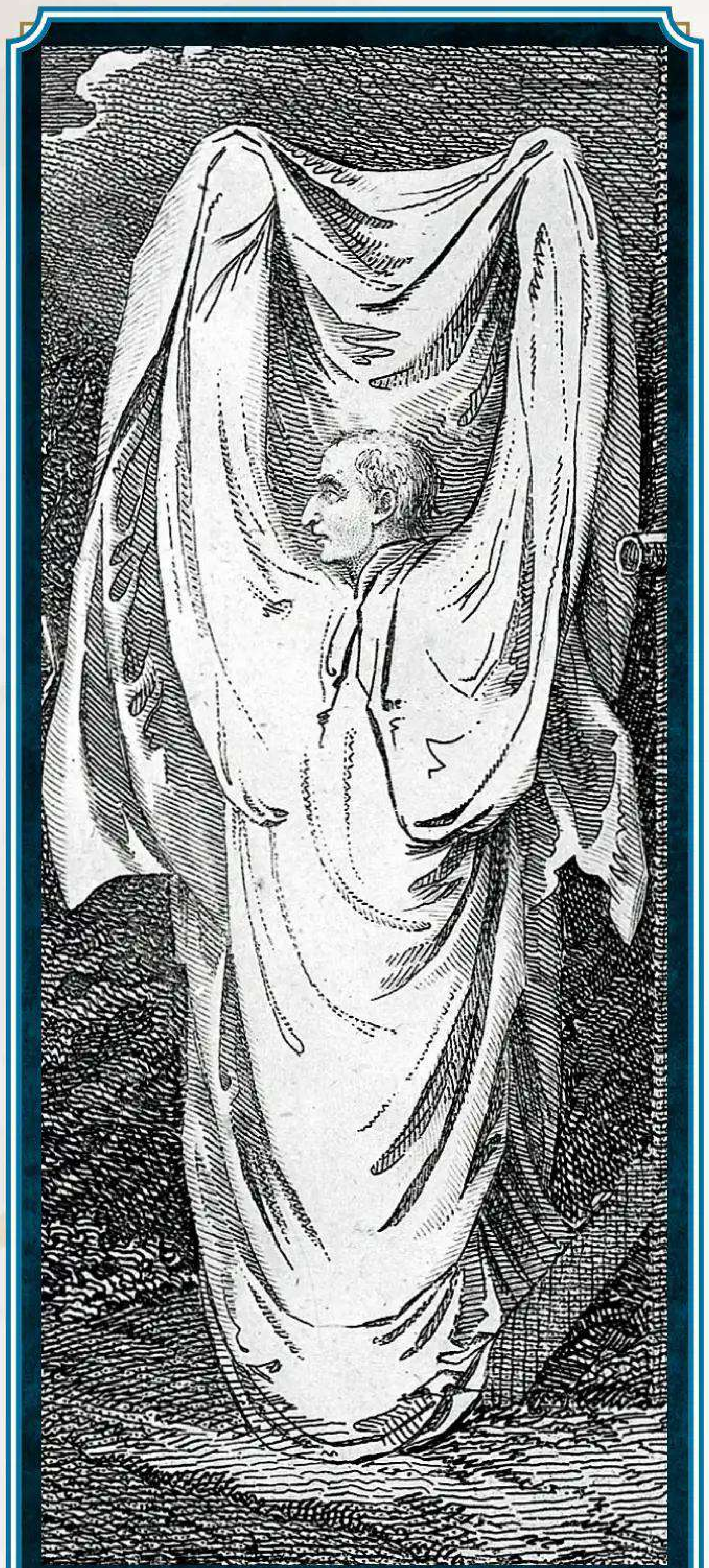
The Ghost Club's origins go back to the 1850s, to a very loose student society, which was formed at Trinity College in Cambridge. It was then launched officially in London in 1862 (with an announcement in *The Times*) and it seems to have carried on in this manner until the early 1870s, when it ceased meeting. In 1882 it was revived by Reverend Stainton Moses, a forgotten 19th-century figure who combined life as a Church of England clergyman with being a remarkable medium. The Ghost Club at this stage was a much smaller and more private body, attracting people such as Sir William Crookes and WB Yeats. They would meet every so often in London to privately discuss the latest in ghosts, but were perhaps more occult-orientated. They researched traditions and referred to each other as Brother Ghost. It continued in this manner until the 1930s, and by this time the club had begun to attract a number of younger researchers, such as Harry Price. Price would later become world famous for investigating Borley Rectory, a case that he worked on for 20 years and that people are still arguing about to this day. In 1938 Price then relaunched the club as a kind of society dining circle that met regularly during World War II. After Price's death in 1948, The Ghost Club suspended itself for four years until 1952, when Phillip Pool (a Fleet Street journalist) once again revived the club. That club has carried on, more or less, ever since. During the last 60-odd years, The Ghost Club has typically involved investigations into allegedly haunted houses and talks by a wide range of speakers on all kinds of fascinating topics from all points of view.

What kind of investigations does The Ghost Club undertake?

We've conducted investigations around the country, in numerous settings, although there is one interesting exception: graveyards – we don't get many accounts of haunted graveyards these days. We have, however, looked into reports of phenomena in domestic, public and historic buildings. These investigations are quite contrary to the sort of thing that gets televised. My predecessor, Tom Perrott, who was chairman for 29 years, stated that the only equipment he took on most cases was a notebook, a pencil and a sympathetic ear. Not everything that people may think of as being paranormal is necessarily so. We had an investigation in the 1990s at the House of Detention, which is a historic prison-turned-museum in Clerkenwell in central London; we've been into the undercroft of Battle Abbey; and then there's been callouts from private dwellings and houses. I've had one or two experiences during investigations, mostly involving noises or object movement, that I can't explain. A number of our members investigate things on their own account as well as with The Ghost Club, but we don't have any ghost-detecting devices. We would have solved problems in science, philosophy and theology if we did!

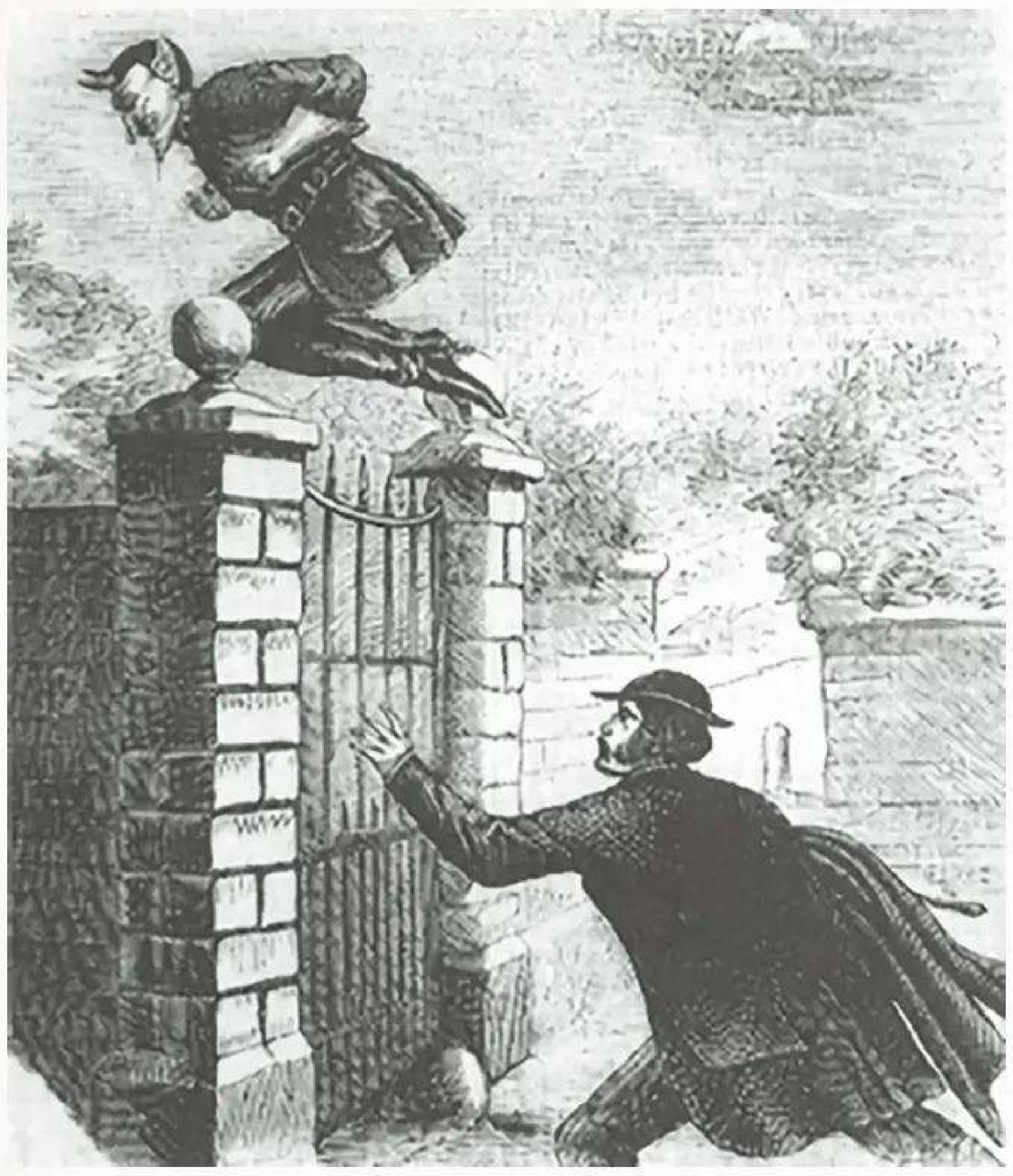
SPOOKS IN THE SMOG

Mysterious hauntings and supernatural happenings in the English capital that have obsessed Great Britain and beyond



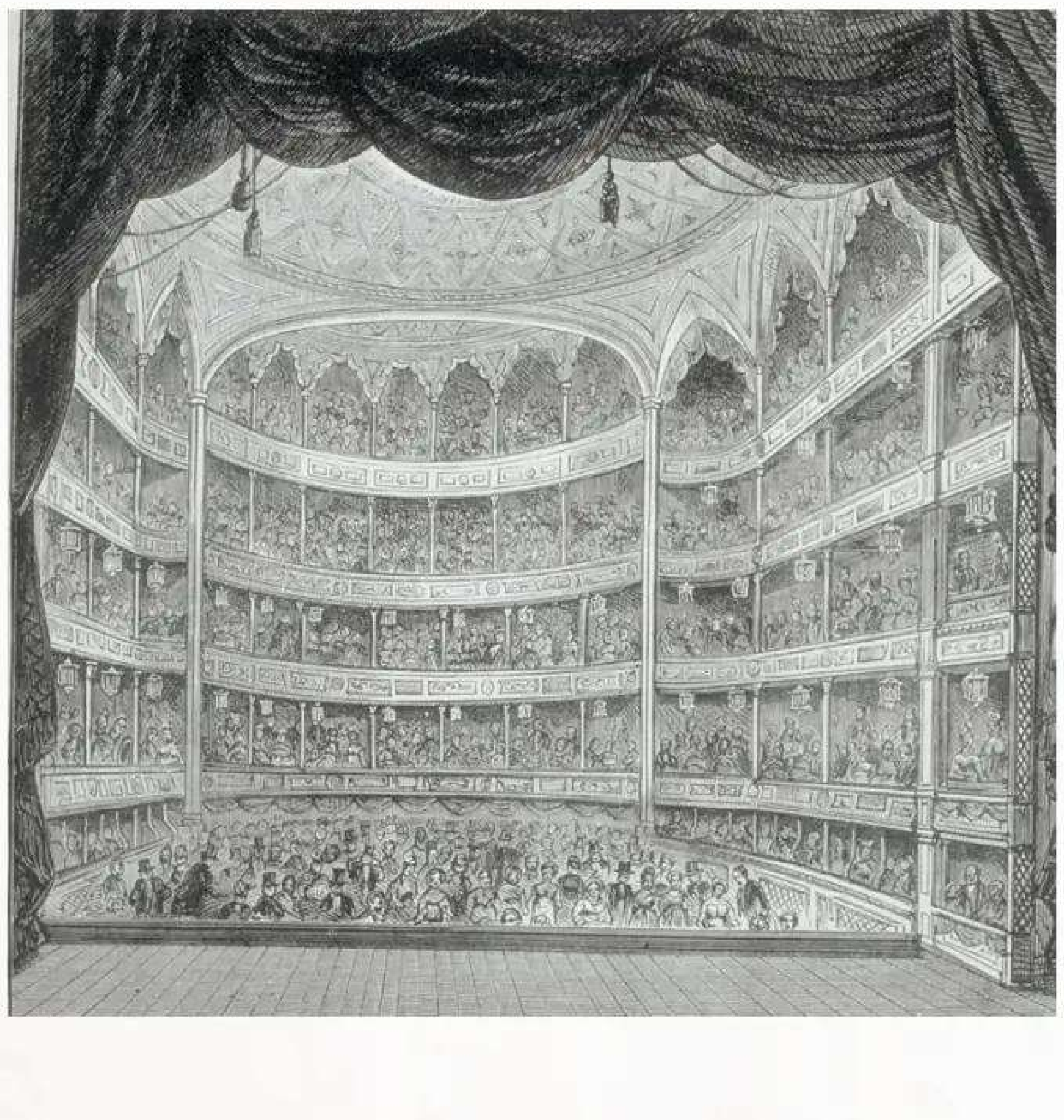
THE HAMMERSMITH GHOST

Towards the end of 1803, several people claimed to have been attacked by a malevolent spirit in the Hammersmith area of London. Believed to be a suicide victim whose soul could not rest as they hadn't been buried in consecrated ground, two female victims died from fright and a brewer's servant was attacked in a graveyard. As a result, local men armed themselves and patrolled the streets, among them one Francis Smith. Smith came across bricklayer Thomas Millwood, who was entirely clad in white for his work. Panicking, Smith shot and killed Millwood. The resultant trial set important legal precedents regarding accountability and mistaken belief.



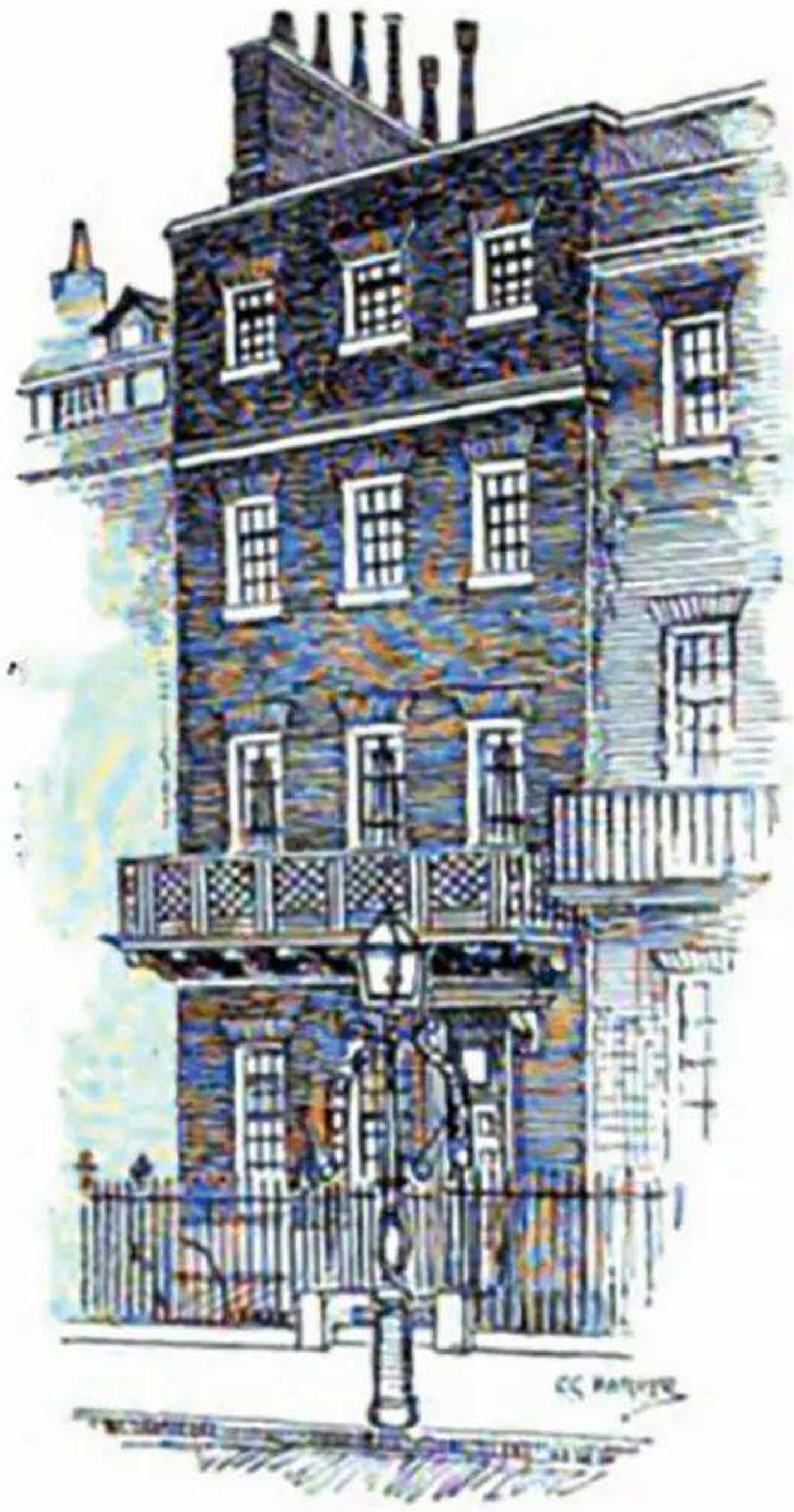
SPRING-HEELED JACK

Without a doubt the most famous Victorian legend is that of Spring-Heeled Jack, who terrorised the streets of London between 1837 and 1904. There were numerous sightings, but none more frightening than Jane Alsop's. On the night of 19 February 1838, she opened her door to a man claiming to be a police officer, who requested a candle because they had caught Spring-Heeled Jack in a nearby alley. As soon as she left the house, however, the man threw off his cloak, revealing a strange oilskin helmet, metallic claws and red blazing eyes. Shooting balls of blue fire from his mouth, he attacked Alsop before her sister ran to her aid and he fled. Jack became a common part of Victorian folklore and was extremely popular in the penny dreadfuls of the time.



THE ELECTRIC HORROR OF BERKELEY SQUARE

A notorious hotspot for supernatural happenings during the latter half of the 19th century, many ghosts walked the halls of 50 Berkeley Square in central London. A particular room on the second floor caused more fear than most, however, and tales include a young maid found screaming, who died shortly afterwards, and Lord Thomas Lyttelton shooting at a mysterious creature in the night. In 1879 an issue of *Mayfair Magazine* reported that "the very party walls of the house, when touched, were found saturated with an electric horror".



THE "HAUNTED HOUSE," BERKELEY SQUARE.

THE GREY MAN OF THE THEATRE ROYAL

The Theatre Royal on Drury Lane plays host to many spectres, the most famous being the Man in Grey, an 18th-century nobleman. In the late 1870s legend has it that workmen uncovered a bricked-up skeleton with a sword protruding from its ribs. Could this grisly find have been the Grey Man himself?

THE ENFIELD POLTERGEIST

In 1977, distressed single mother of four, Peggy Hodgson called local police to her rented terrace home on 284 Green Street. As her kids prepared for bed that August evening, Peggy heard a strange noise upstairs. Thinking it was her daughters, 13-year-old Margaret and 11-year-old Janet, she went to have a look and something terrifying happened. A heavy chest began sliding across the room, apparently without assistance. When Peggy began shoving it back, she met strong resistance from an unseen force. The chest moved a second time, faster. Aghast, Peggy and the girls fled.

When police officers arrived, they found nothing unusual – until they started to leave. Years later, one of them remembered a chair in the living room rising off the floor and moving across the room. After checking for wires and other unseen reasons for the episode, the police left. However, what would become known as the Enfield Poltergeist did not. For months, the poltergeist wreaked havoc, apparently throwing objects and making noises.

As news of the phenomena leaked, it quickly gained extensive media attention leading to sceptics accusing the girls of being the source. In desperation, Peggy contacted the Society for Psychical Research. Two investigators, Guy Lyon Playfair and Maurice Grosse, responded, hiring a barrister, Mary Rose Barrington, to verify their research. During more than a year on the premises, the investigators recorded numerous incidents, including Playfair's encounter. He entered an upstairs room to find the entire Victorian-era fireplace ripped from the wall – hardly something the young girls were capable of.

Witnesses saw Janet levitate, and she was dragged down the stairs by an unknown entity. She also broke into disturbing fits of cursing, and an eerie voice was heard coming from her. When investigators posed questions, the voice replied that it belonged to a man named Bill. A record search revealed that a man named Bill Wilkins had lived and died in the house.

The case was so captivating it reached international attention, with American demonologists Ed and Lorraine Warren travelling to the London home convinced that it was a case of demonic possession – their investigation was later dramatised in *The Conjuring 2* (2016).

Throughout the investigations, the girls were suspected of playing tricks, but they claimed that very few of the occurrences were their doing. Thirty years after the events subsided, Janet told an interviewer, "I know from my own experience that it was real. It lived off me, off my energy." Although the sceptics continue to persist, the poltergeist activity in Enfield is one of Britain's most well-documented hauntings and remains largely unexplained.

THE HAUNTED LANGHAM HOTEL

Situated just off Oxford Street, the 1865-built Langham is one of London's top five-star retreats. But attempt to bed down for the night in this prestigious hotel, and you might be in for a spooky surprise. Plenty of spectres haunt the halls, including former high-profile guests Emperor Napoleon III, and a German prince who committed suicide by leaping from the hotel's fourth floor. However, the most malevolent ghost resides in room 333.

Every October, the ghost of a honeymooning Victorian doctor who murdered his new wife – then killed himself – is said to stalk anyone brave enough to stay in this room. Take the terrified BBC journalist, James Alexander Gordon, who in 1973 saw a bright green ball of light that slowly morphed into the shape of the Victorian doctor. He hastily fled, before returning with a colleague, who corroborated Gordon's tale.

The ghost doctor's most recent appearance was in 2014, when it freaked out members of the England cricket team. Apparently, one player even awoke in the middle of the night, became so unsettled that he went to sleep in the room of his teammate!

If you like your paranormal encounters to be served with a side of luxury, then book a stay at the 5-star Langham

> "She also broke into disturbing fits of cursing, and an eerie voice was heard coming from her"

Image source: wiki/Charles George Harper

DARK HISTORY OF LONDON

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